

GO WITH THE FLOW: PLUMBING MAINTENANCE MADE EASY

Yachting[®]

SINCE 1907

Classics Never Grow Old

Aphrodite Still a Knockout
J Class Racing in the Solent
Honey Fitz Restored to Glory



**SUZE ORMAN'S
ADVICE FOR
BOAT BUYERS**

**DAY CRUISING THE
CHRIS-CRAFT'S LAUREL**

+ NEB 50, HORIZON E50, FERRETTI 670

COVER: smoggin sunset.

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NEB 50 18



HORIZON E56 20



APHRODITE 30



HONEY FITZ 38



CHRIS-CRAFT LAUNCH 32 58



FERRETTI 870 50



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The Boats

From afar the **NEB 50** appears to be every bit a traditional Down East lobster boat. Our design expert Dennis Caprio took a closer look and uncovered a “wolf in sheep’s clothing.” Rough seas off West Palm Beach, Florida, provided deputy editor Patrick Sciacca and the **HORIZON E56** with a worthy test track for **YACHTING**’s exclusive sea trial. Find out how they avoided rolling with the punches on page 20. **APHRODITE** has been turning heads and capturing the hearts of mariners for the past 76 years. Turn to page 30 to discover how this yacht has maintained her appeal. From warship to presidential yacht, **HONEY FITZ** is an iconic American yacht. From her launch in 1932 to her most recent refit, **YACHTING** brings you the complete story on page 38. Editor-at-large Jay Coyle learns that a day trip through the Florida Keys and a **CHRIS-CRAFT LAUNCH 32** may be the perfect pairing. Did he ever return the keys? Find his story on page 44. Gale force winds vs. the **FERRETTI 870**: We declare a winner on page 48.

COVER PHOTO BY BENJAMIN MENDLOWITZ

Prose and *Pilar*

What better fit for our classic-yacht issue than one of the first sport-fishermen, *Pilar*, and her legendary owner, Ernest Hemingway? This excerpt from Paul Hendrickson’s book *Hemingway’s Boat* sheds new light on the author and his beloved yacht.

Dancing with Giants

Senior editor Dennis Caprio and photographer Onne van der Wal travel across the pond to witness the magnificent J Class yachts racing in the challenging waters of the Solent. Our dynamic duo captures the timeless allure of these beautiful racers.



GETTY IMAGES



ONNE VAN DER WAL

It's very likely

that somewhere in [Ernest] Hemingway's dozen suitcases were catalogs and circulars and fold-over mailings from Wheeler Shipyard, Inc., whose listed address was "Foot of Cropsey Avenue, Brooklyn, N.Y." If Hemingway did have this clutch of boating literature with him, then it had traveled through Spain and France and Africa, through the Mediterranean and the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden, through Babati and Kiunga and the Ngorongoro Crater.

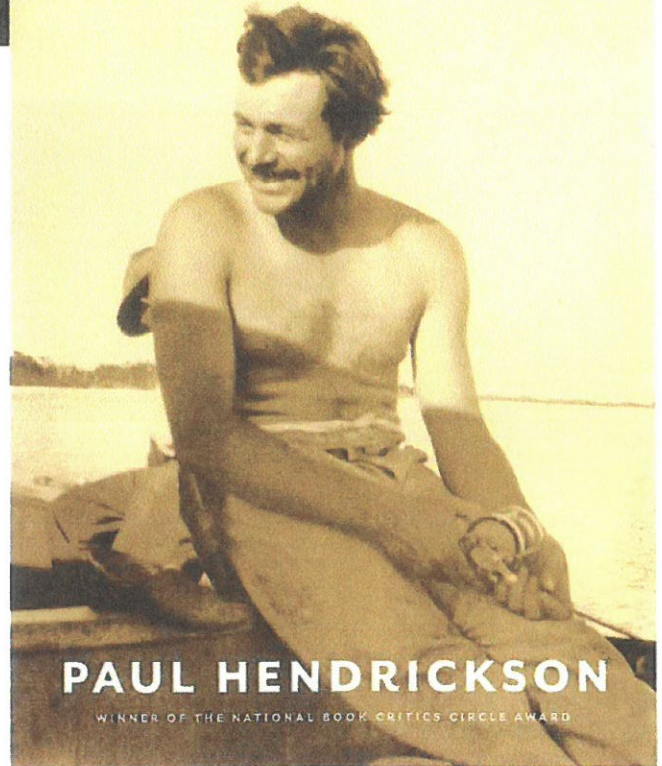
A small, fold-over pamphlet had been mailed to him the previous summer from the Wheeler firm. It was postmarked July 14, 1933, which suggests Hemingway would have received it about three weeks before he left the States on his long journey, first to Europe, then to Africa. He may have had literature from other boat makers, too, since buying a motorized fishing cruiser had so long and lately preoccupied his thinking. (The brochure, with its still readable postmark, is among Hemingway's papers at the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum in Boston.) The founder of the company, Howard E. Wheeler, had Palmer-perfect handwriting, pork-chop sideburns, wild eyebrows, a walrus mustache, and five grown sons working by his side in the family enterprise in Brooklyn. Howard had addressed the mail-out himself to "Mr. Ernest Hemingway, Box 406, Key West, Florida." There was a one-and-a-half-cent stamp affixed to the document, which described in typical inflated advertising rhetoric the company's wares. It was a flyer for the 1933 model year, since catalogs for 1934 boats hadn't yet come off the presses.

The Wheeler firm designed and built cabin cruisers, sea skiffs, yachts, and motorsailers (a boat combining the features of both a motorboat and a sailboat). The company's signature model, known throughout the boating industry, was the Playmate, which came in many lengths and sleeping configurations and price arrangements — twin screw, single screw, diesel power, gasoline engine, sedan, twin cabin, stateroom cabin, enclosed bridge. For several years Hemingway had been studying such vessels in the cabin-cruiser style, and by the time he arrived back in America on the *Paris*, he seems to have known exactly the size of boat he wanted, and he wanted it from Wheeler.

As in the automotive business, the so-called new models from a boat builder, along with their advertising wares, began to appear in the fall of the previous model year. That is, boats for the 1934 season were being readied by the major shipyards in the late summer and all through the autumn of 1933, and this is also when the new catalogs were mailed out to prospective customers and when ads began to show up in the press. The big event every year for showcasing new boats — and for taking orders — was the National Motor Boat Show, held in January at Grand Central Palace in New York. This is when the shipyards from across the country unveiled their beauties in the flesh, seeking to outdo one another with flashy exhibit spaces and giveaway trinkets and walk-through models. Sometimes chastely sexy girls were there to greet buyers on the foredeck. In other words, the New York boat show was just like a big car show, except that the

HEMINGWAY'S BOAT

EVERYTHING HE LOVED IN LIFE, AND LOST, 1934-1961



motoring dreams were on water instead of the open road. Since he was in Africa, Hemingway was going to miss by roughly two months the gaudy 1934 show at which the Wheeler firm was one of the starring concerns.

Many American boat makers in the thirties were just trying to hang on, no matter the impression they were giving to would-be customers. By mid-Depression, some companies were down to a handful of employees. And their new models were often pretty much the old models — using the same hulls from prior years, but with different manufacturing numbers. The 1934 Playmates — how Hemingway must have loathed the name — ranged in size from twenty-eight to forty-six feet. The company produced mainly stock boats rather than custom-made craft, although if you were sufficiently well-heeled, the boatyard at the foot of Cropsey Avenue was glad to do custom work, starting either from absolute scratch or, more characteristically, from a stock Wheeler hull and constructing upward to your specifications. Mostly, though, Wheeler was known to yachting enthusiasts as a "production shipyard." The company had a reputation for good woodwork, inside and out, especially in its cabinetry. Its "brightwork" (what you see on the exterior) was known to be very solid, if not spectacular. Still, when you said "Wheeler," you tended to think of look-alike boats. To pure yachting snobs, for whom the Depression would have been an inconvenience, that term, "stock boat," no less than the term "production shipyard," would have had an odor.

And yet it's also true that the designers and old-school Scandinavian master shipwrights at Wheeler would produce

some famed original boats in these years — a sixty-nine-footer, for instance, for a financier named Charles S. Payson, so that he might hydroplane to his office on Wall Street. These craft were known in the yachting world as “streamline commuters” or simply “commuters.” Payson’s custom Wheeler came out the year after *Pilar* [the boat Hemingway will buy] and was christened *Saga*, with photographs of her in the boating journals, knifing the water with her V-12 Packards, this legend underneath: “Streamlining in Mahogany.” Charlie Payson, known to be impeccable with his money, was married to the former Joan Whitney, and Joan was the sister of Jock Whitney, and Jock and Joan were the only children of Helen Hay Whitney and Payne Whitney, fabulously rich Americans and devotees of the sporting life. In the thirties, Jock Whitney and his spouse, and Charles Payson and his spouse, lived next to each other on Long Island’s Gold Coast. It sounds so tight and clubby and Gatsbyesque, although apparently things were competitive, too, in a sporting way. *Saga* is said to have come about in the first place out of Payson’s need to outrun Jock Whitney’s mahogany commuter, *Aphrodite*. The brothers-in-law

himself. He’d recently bought a Wheeler thirty-eight. He was the son of Colonel John Jacob Astor IV, robber baron supreme. Vincent Astor could have afforded any kind of yacht or yacht maker he wanted. And he came to Brooklyn for a Wheeler — well, not literally. The hull of his *Little Nourmahal* was white and she was a little more upright as she churned the water, but still: Astor’s custom Wheeler looked remarkably similar to the production Wheeler that, in about six months, was going to come off the wooden ways at Cropsey Avenue, with her five-character Spanish name lettered neatly in white on her dark stern.

On March 24, in Paris, four days before boarding an ocean liner with the same name, Hemingway wrote to Arnold Gingrich [an editor] at *Esquire*. Much of the letter was taken up with instructions regarding his next contribution to the magazine, which would be about the safari. Further on: *I hope to hell your finances are on the wax rather than the bloody wane as I am broke (after fashion) and it is a pain in the jaw to be writing stuff for nearly enough money to pay the postage when I could put it in a slightly different form and get 10 times as much for it. Cosmop paid 5500 for that story [“One Trip Across”]—think I told you—I want to buy a boat that costs \$7,000 and*

“I want to buy a boat that costs \$7,000 and have only \$3500. Once I get the boat am set. But have been within a grand of enough to buy it with twice and both times the money has peed away.”

— Ernest Hemingway



PILAR WAS ONE OF THE FIRST PURE SPORT-FISHING BOATS EVER BUILT.

wished to race toward their money in the city, and whoever got there first could make more.

If you went past forty-six feet in length for your Wheeler watery dream, you were really talking about a yacht, not a motor cruiser. So technically speaking, Ernest Hemingway never owned a yacht, even though that phrase is often thrown around in connection with the history of his boat.

The '34 catalog offered an endorsement from Vincent Astor

have only \$3500. Once I get the boat am set. But have been within a grand of enough to buy it with twice and both times the money has peed away.

In the letter mailed from France on the twenty-fourth, a hook had been set. *I want to buy a boat that costs \$7,000 and have only \$3500. Once I get the boat am set.* On April 3, 1934, the big-boned 210-pounder in suit and tie popping quotes at Pier 57 beside the small and zebra-suited woman couldn't know for certain his hook-setting had worked. Couldn't know that the magazine editor in Illinois had fairly hopped to it and already mailed him, in care of Scribners, a nine-page, handwritten, semi-sycophantic letter that began: “The enclosed, or attached, represents a couple of blood vessels. You'll have to scratch another \$500 somehow, and then we all stand up and call you skipper.” Hemingway wouldn't know his hook-setting had worked until he'd opened an envelope at his publishing house. The letter and the check, written on April 2 in Chicago and posted the next day via air mail, were there waiting, on either April 4 or April 5, in Max Perkins's office, when the biggest horse in the Scribners stable went to visit his editor at 597 Fifth Avenue. And immediately afterward, a jubilant man, suppressing his demons, with dough in hand, spouse on arm, glorying in his life, in his luck, in the new possibilities of the physical world, taxied to Brooklyn, to buy his boat.

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