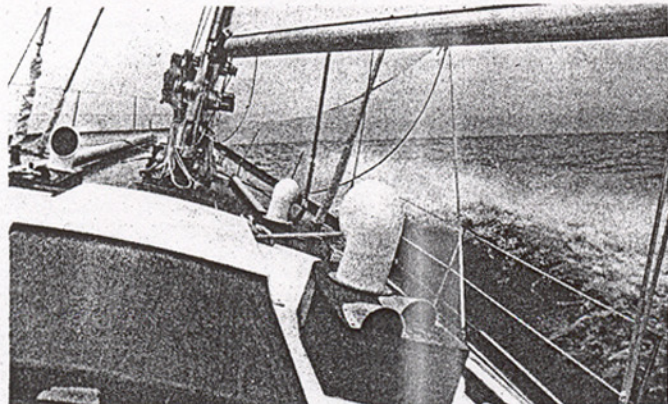


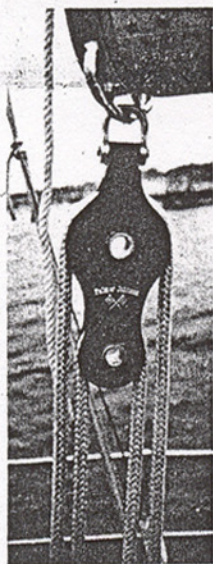
FINLANDS LATEST

—SWAN 55

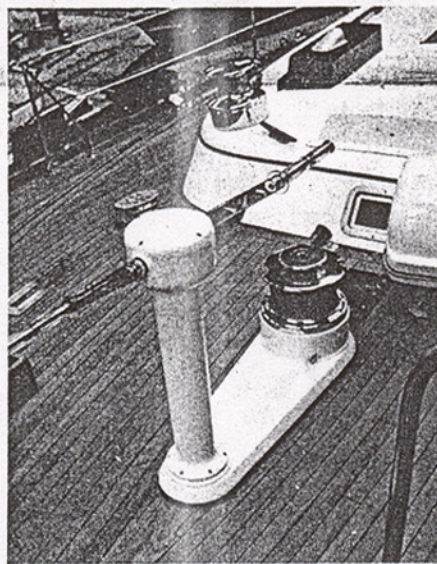
FROM A BREED OF RACING YACHTS WITH ACCOMMODATION WHICH CRUISING MEN LIKE



The Swan heads out into the Baltic.



Palmer Johnson sister block on the mainsheet.



Barlow coffee grinder on the Brazilian sloop.



Rod Stephens at the wheel with Chris Everitt in the foreground.

NAUTOR KY's biggest and latest production yacht, the Swan 55, was born when a Swiss textile manufacturer named Christian Fischbacher commissioned a new design from Sparkman and Stephens.

Basically a cruising man and a long-time Stephens aficionado, Fischbacher sails only a month a year and charters his yacht the rest of the time.

He wanted a fast yawl that would not only please Mediterranean and Caribbean charterers but would attract a good professional skipper and be easily maintained.

At the same time, Pekka Koskenkylä, the Nautor managing director, sought an addition to his speedy S and S range (Swan 36, 43, 40, 37), and the Stephens brothers sent him the 55 lines for his interest.

Almost before you could say glass reinforced polyester, Nautor built the hull plug, took off moulds, prefabricated a complete interior and invited Fischbacher and his wife, without obligation, and Rod Stephens to go to Finland to see the result.

Fine, said the Fischbachers: but they wanted an all-teak interior, not the by now Nautor standard of pale koto and teak.

No problem, said Koskenkylä: they would sell the koto to someone else.

Last week Christian Fischbacher went back to Pietarsaari in Finland to sail test his near-completed Swan 55 before the Arctic Snows froze the Gulf of Bothnia, and Yachting and Boating joined the party.

Well advanced

At Nautor's six-stream production line (40 yachts building under one roof) we found not one big Swan but five. A Swan 53—a reverse transom sloop, the racing version—was awaiting shipment to an owner in Rio de Janeiro, and another sloop and two yawls (one for a British owner) were well advanced with fitting out.

Koskenkylä confidently predicts that within two years he will have built more than 20 55s; and he believes that it will perhaps be his most successful racing production yet.

Rod Stephens told us that the 55 is "pretty similar in hull design" to Jacaranda, Bruce Daling's Stephens-designed hot tip for the Cape Town-Rio race, and the fabulously successful Australian sloop, Ragamuffin, has the same moderate displacement and shape.

In current Stephens' bustle-skeg-rudder-trim-tab style, the Swan 55 ought to sail fast over a wide range of conditions: she has a 45 per cent ballast to displacement ratio, generous beam (14 ft 2 in.) and a high sail area to wetted surface ratio. A well-proportioned mini-doghouse sits sleekly on an

otherwise flush teak-laid deck.

Again as you might expect, she has the typical Stephens shallow racing cockpit with four genoa and spinnaker sheet winches centrally mounted at the four corners of the doghouse. The racing sloop 53s in the boat yard were each equipped with a Barlow coffee grinder amidships aft of the mast.

Describing the interior is tricky. There have been three variations—at the request of the owners—in the first five boats. But now Koskenkylä has settled on a standard interior of his own design, the main feature of which, he reasons, is that it gives the best locations for the two toilets and the galley and provides a truly spacious main cabin, it easily seats a dozen at a time.

Big galley

There is full standing headroom, of course, from the bridge deck bulkhead to the forecabin. The galley, which entered through its own hatchway from the cockpit has two berths, each pulling out to double size, and its own toilet compartment.

Forward in the doghouse is the hatchway into the main accommodation where the galley lies to port, complete with luke cooker, ice box and twin sinks with pressurized hot and cold water. Though big, the galley is well-sited for ventilation and comfort. Opposite is the navigator's perch, forward facing, full-sized and fully equipped.

There is a single pilot berth on each side in the saloon with a seven-foot long U-shaped settee to port and a slightly shorter L-shaped settee to starboard. The large dining table—a perfect example of the superb joinery in this boat—features a removable fiddle stowage for cups, glasses, bottles.

Moving forward through a sliding door, you find a second saloon with two pilot berths and two settees, the port pair can be partitioned off to provide a guest cabin, the second toilet compartment, complete with shower, can be entered from this cabin, or from the offset corridor.

To starboard of the toilet are three hanging lockers with shelves. Through another sliding door you come to the forecabin, which has two berths, a hanging locker and a seat—clearly a crew cabin, the berths cover two large sail bins.

The headlining through the boat is particularly attractive, and the locker space is copious in the extreme. Electric lights abound, with a couple red-glassed so that the interior can be illuminated at night without disturbing off-watch sleepers.

Golot and yard-made hatches, deck prisms and the doghouse portlights, coupled with the light-coloured Koto veneers, give an airiness that

is often lacking in large flush-decked yachts.

Above decks, the 55 has impeccable Nautor spars and much of her hardware has been produced at the factory: giant bottle-screws, alloy turning blocks, deck-sunk highlead lever for the inner forestay, bow fitting, wheel and pedestal, stanchions, pulpit and pushpit (complete with gate for Mediterranean stern-to mooring).

The reefing gear is a superb piece of big-boat machinery (sorely missed till now) produced by Palmer Johnson, who market Swan Yachts in the USA. Like the Nautor-made boom outhaul, it was operated with a single winch handle. Cracked the Palmer Johnson resident engineer, Bill Emery: "You can work this whole boat with one handle."

The Gulf of Bothnia, only two hundred miles from the Arctic Circle, is no place to go sailing at this time of the year. It was grey, already cutting cold and windy for our Sunday morning sail.

A small, obviously, a tory crowd gathered at the quay to see Pietarsaari's latest Admiral's Cup contender and to watch the dozen orange men fussing about her decks. Rod's voice, half joking half serious rasped on the 26-knot breeze: "ideal weather."

The Volvo engine gave us eight knots as we wound through the black and red stakes that somewhat uncertainly marked the channel.

As we hoisted full main, mizzen and a high cut jib, we rode into the short steep seas that were building up outside the natural harbour. Like her smaller Swan sisters, she shipped only small amounts of water. We were touching an indicated nine knots.

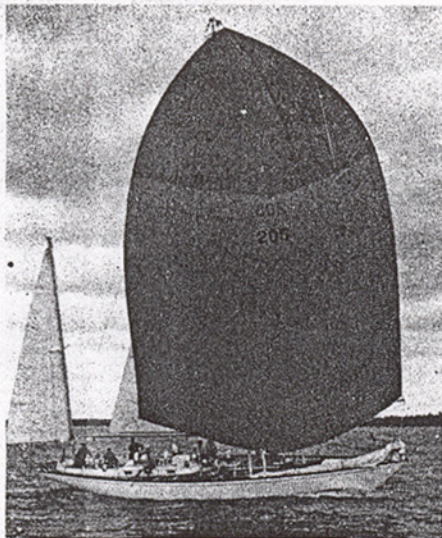
The boat moved easily and balanced well, and for all her size she was easy to steer one-handed—though Fischbacher has shunned modernities like trim-tabs. We chafed down to working jib, then to spinnaker, and the balance remained the same.

But the sails, as everyone agreed, were not giving the boat her best, and they came in for sharp criticism. Rod would write immediately to the makers.

No vices

Armed with a dynamometer, he scamped about the boat—and up the mast—checking rigging loads while we read off the angle of heel: 30 degrees, 32, 28, 33...

We hoisted the mizzen stay-sail and the B and G harrier hit the 10-knot limit on a beam reach. Downwind she was vice-less. Tacking her back home, her cruising owner was delighted that she performed just as sweetly under jib and mizzen alone—though for the blazing winch men the 50-yard tacks clearly indicated the merit of those coffee grinders fitted to



The spinnaker, a bit on the large size, belongs to the sloop rigged boat.

the two boats back at the yard.

Rod Stephens, who normally comes away from a trial with two or three pages filled with notes, had been hard put to it to write even half a dozen comments — and

most of them were directed at the absent sailmaker. He congratulated Koskenkylä: "She has been very well prepared for trials." Through chattering teeth, we stammered our agreement.

Rod Stephens tells the story behind the Swan 55

THE ORIGIN of the Swan 55 was a design for a client wishing a very fast yacht for use in the Mediterranean and possibly the West Indies. The timing was coincidental with release of the I.O.R. Rule so the design was produced to this rule.

The basic hull design includes reduced wetted surface combined with our current concept of short keel with separate skeg-mounted rudder.

Same profile

For maximum competitive performance, the design includes provision for a trimmer, while for the cruising version the profile is the same, with the trimmer replaced by a fixed member.

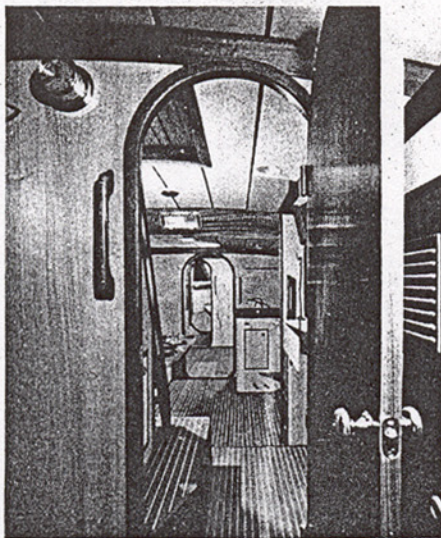
Two basic sail plans are provided — the yawl rig on a 55 foot hull with classical counter stern, and a sloop rig on a 53 foot hull with shortened reverse transom.

The original cabin plan provides accommodation for a professional crew with galley forward, particularly suited to possible charter application. Standard arrangement includes galley amidships and both arrangements include a fine owner's stateroom aft.

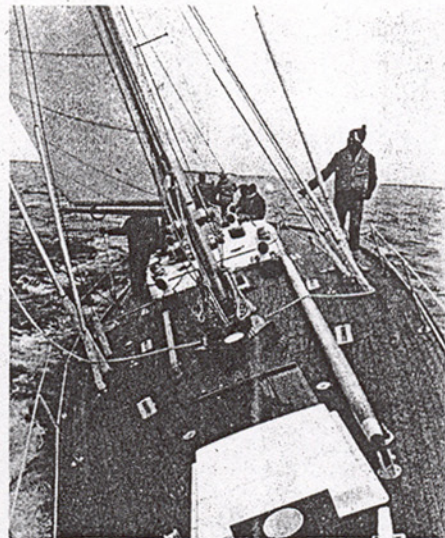
Displacement is moderate with good stability provided by generous beam and ample ballast. It is expected that excellent performance will include good controllability, and a boat that will sail to her rating over a wide range of conditions.

Brief October sailing trials indicated a strong and stiff hull with a delightful feel working through a head sea, coupled with ability to sail very close to the wind.

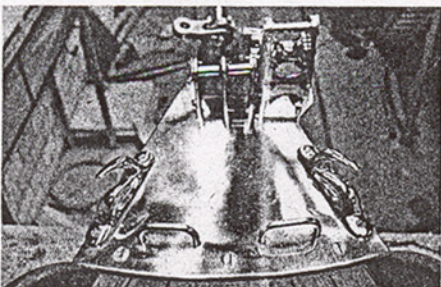
Power trials indicated ample power and smooth performance from the Volvo Penta MD-21A Engine, and folding propeller.



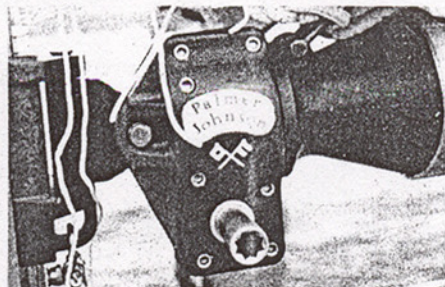
Submarine or surface ship. Five separate cabins on the trot.



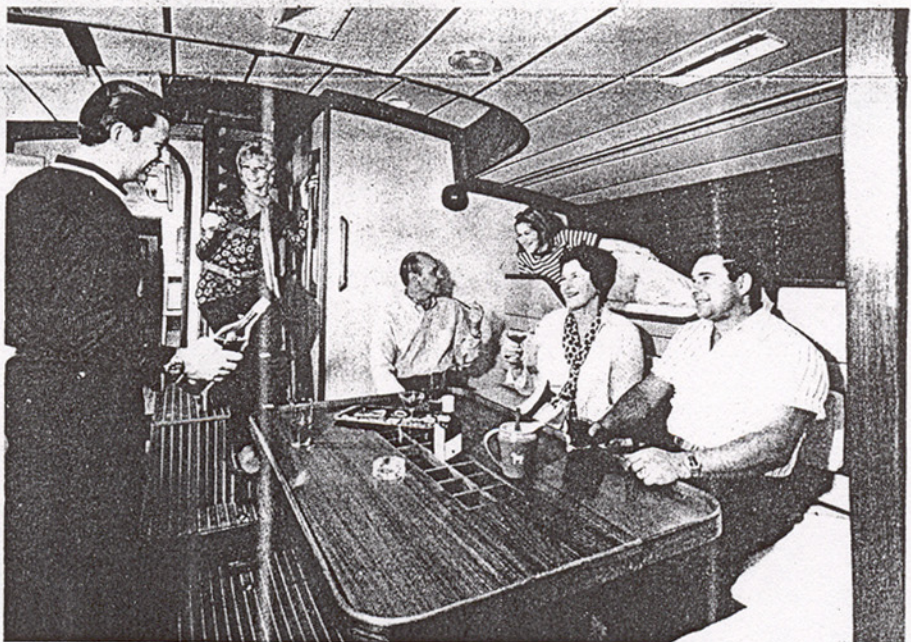
The clear teak layed decks showing the single spinnaker pole.



The pins on the jib tack fitting proved a little difficult to work.



The Palmer Johnson roller reefing gear with the winder adapted for a Barlow winch handle.



The saloon is 7ft. long and in the middle of the table is an effective fiddle arrangement.

