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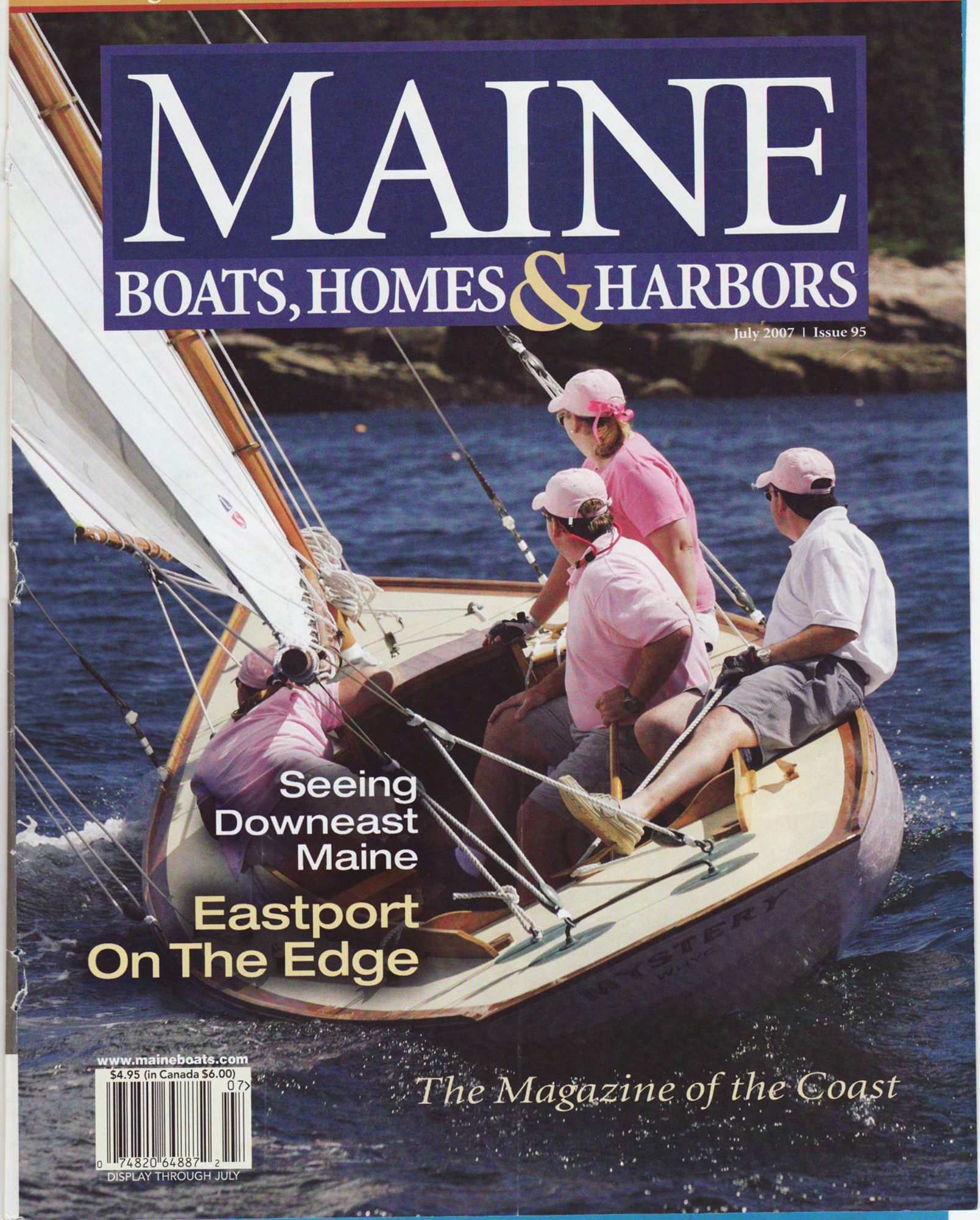

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The Magazine of the Coast

Seguin 40: A Seagoing Shoal-

Shoal-draft coastal cruiser and seagoing passagemaker: this yacht will take you anywhere.

The Seguin 40—the author's latest All-Time Favorite Dream Yacht—is as ground-breaking now as it was then.

BY ART PAINE

BECAUSE I DON'T ADVERTISE my professional services—rather, I depend entirely on word of mouth—most readers likely don't know that I now work as a yacht design consultant. I help people design, evaluate, select, or outfit a new boat. In that capacity, much of my time is spent convincing consumers NOT to put every new whizzbang aboard their latest dream. I am a believer that, unlike in the cyber world, where today's computer or digital device is inevitably better and faster and sexier than yesterday's, at sea the proven older methods and designs are often better, and, especially when it comes to cruising, less can be more. As a result, my fees are often less than the cost of the unnecessary (or unnecessarily expensive) gear that I talk people out of!

In that light it should come as no surprise that the latest bull's eye in my moving target—Art's All-Time Favorite Dream Yacht—is a design from the past millennium. My apologies to readers who have come to assume that any boat I review will be contemporary, and from an active design office whose plans will be available for immediate purchase. This one satisfies at least one normal expectation—it hails from Maine.

I have made statements in the past that may have sounded bombastic. Those statements may even have sounded similar to this one, but I'm going to make it anyway: This 25-year-old design, the Seguin 40, despite a couple of reservations that seem to have conspired to limit total production to only six or seven hulls, holds my rating as the most versatile cruising design I have ever seen. The most for me, at any rate. The reason is simple: I love sailing in the Bahamas, but I also yearn to sail around the planet. This amazing, pretty design, which has upset many nautical conventions, can do both.

The Seguin 40 is both a superb shoalwater cruiser and a superb seagoing boat. It is a 40' sailboat with a bow that I could nudge ashore on a Bahamas beach, yet it is stable enough for serious offshore voyaging. I have reports from owners that the S-40 is NOT tender—itself a surprise—and that it is very forgiving during rough conditions at sea. All that, combined with a big dinghy-shaped hull with diminishable wetted surface (pulling up the centerboard reduces the wetted surface quite a bit), and you have passage-making speed in all conditions. What, then, is missing? Why aren't dozens of S-40s out there?

Craig Walters, a former Sparkman & Stephens designer, is the magician behind this design. He was working on his own when he designed this and another amazing, similar boat, the Clearwater 35. All the Seguin 40 hulls were built by Lyman-Morse Boatbuilding in Thomaston, although not all were finished off there. The very first boat was briefly owned by Cabot Lyman himself and used as a demonstrator. After taking several firsts in two years of Gulf of Maine Ocean Racing Association action, it was sold and taken cruising.

photograph courtesy Lyman-Morse Boatbuilding

Water Cruiser

The hull shape is simply brilliant. It's as if Walters took a J-something hull, molded it out of polyvinyl chloride, put a big glob of weight in the middle, and heated it into plasticity in a big oven. Down slumped the belly, up warped the ends—but just subtly. He added no ballasted fin keel at all; rather, he specified instead a large centerboard that, when down, looks for all the world like a keel. Every bit of effective ballast consists of an inside lead slab filling out the central belly of the beast.

The board has enough weight to allow it to fall into action and no more. And that's the genius of it. No worries about the boat taking a knockdown that might cause a heavy bronze board to slam home suddenly and contribute negatively to capsize resistance. The centerboard retracts easily with a two-part purchase taken to a winch. All that is easily seen and serviced from the cabin top.

Several interior layouts were available. The auxiliary engine, and thus the strut and propeller position, varied also. In all the hulls built save one, a big skeg housed the propeller shaft and gave protection to the prop. Which leads us aft to the rudder, a truly marvelous thing.

If you asked me, as a consultant, about the limiting factor in a beachable boat I would quickly cast doubts on any type of segmented rudder. I would point out that the rudder is at once the most critical and demonstrably most vulnerable feature of an offshore boat. Any sort of rudder designed in the past that can swing or retract has shown problems, with the notable exception of the Walters designs. His elegantly simple welded-aluminum upper box and brutally strong fiberglass fin have stood the test of time. That his rudders actually work represents an exception to my opinion about segmented rudders.

As for the damn fine looks of the boat in the water, it's all about fine distinctions. The boat appropriately looks like a cruiser-racer. The cabin is reminiscent of several Dick Carter designs, with simple and clean proportions. The sheer is very flat, especially for its era. The cockpit has a traveler supporting end-boom sheeting, which is a hint that suggests big-dinghy performance.

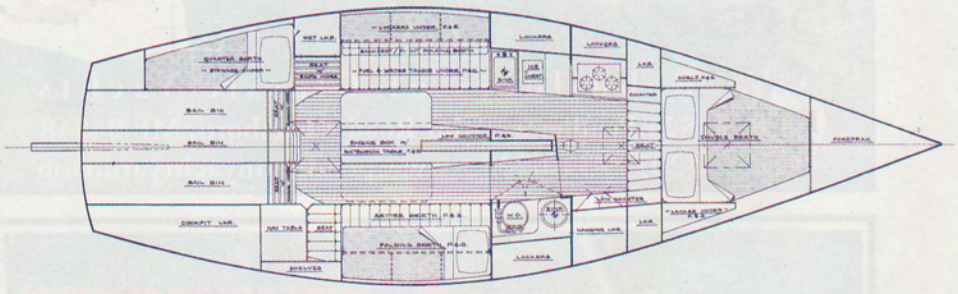
Exceptionally few yacht designs have even attempted to create combined sea boats and gunkholers. One of the Seguin owners suggested I elaborate on this by comparing the Seguin 40 to the Ralph Munroe Presto-type sharpies. It was an appropriate suggestion. There are many similarities, first among them being reliance entirely on inside ballast. But the Munroe sharpies were unusual and perhaps even tricky designs that gained passable stability from hard-cornered round chines and heavy weight. They achieved seaworthiness from low freeboard combined with a rig that prevented them from pointing too high or sailing too fast. And, too, their reputation benefited from a critical piece of equipment called "the nut behind the wheel." Commodore Munroe was a salty showman out to prove a point—that shallow-draft sharpies could be good sea boats. They were detuned enough to be incapable of straying too far into harm's way, but in amateur hands things might have turned out differently.

The Seguin 40 is a far more refined and sophisticated approach. It's pretty easy to locate the center of gravity of the ballast, because it consists exclusively of a flattened square of lead just inside the fairbody. This accounts for 8,000 pounds positioned less than two feet below the waterline. This being about six inches higher than the center of a "normal" fin keel on a similar yacht of the time, it's obvious that the whole caboodle would never have worked unless everything above managed to be unusually light. Fortunately, the designer knew that with-

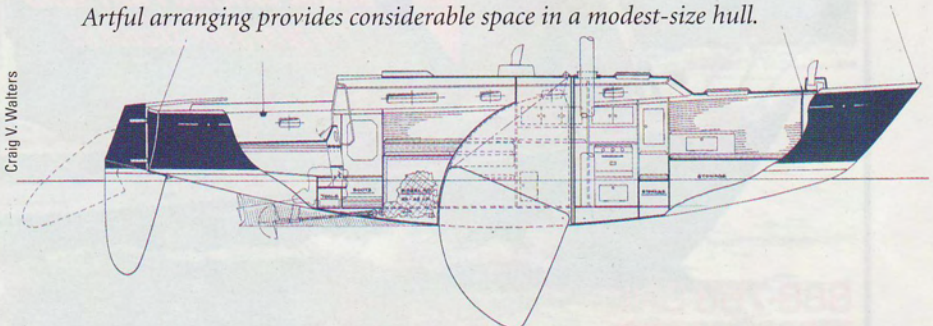
SPECIFICATIONS / SEGUIN 40

LOA	39.65'
Beam	12.20'
DWL	31.25'
Draft	2.30' board up;
	7.33' board down
Ballast	8,000 lbs.
Displ.	18,000 lbs. (approx.)
Sail area	719 sq. ft.

DESIGN: Craig V. Walters
BUILDER: Lyman-Morse Boatbuilding, 82 Water St., Thomaston, ME 04861. 207-354-6904; www.lymanmorse.com



Artful arranging provides considerable space in a modest-size hull.



Craig V. Walters

A centerboard and segmented rudder provide beachability for the island cruiser.

out the wrenching strain of a fin keel, this goal was more easily accomplished.

The hull, interior bulkheads, and various other common strain-bearing parts weigh much less than customary. Probably none of the Seguin 40s weighed more than 20,000 pounds all loaded up for cruising, and the racing boats might have weighed just as little as Walters claimed: 17,000 pounds. Weight like this is pretty light for a cruising boat of this length, and I realize that if I ever satisfied my latest dream and owned one, I'd have to think like a multihull sailor when it came time to load up for an ocean passage.

I should point out that this very unusual design wouldn't work if it had a heavy rig. It's clear that Walters kept his engineer's eye on safety when he designed the double-spreader mast and its supports. Several of the Seguin 40s didn't even have roller-furling extrusions on the headstays. This is a reminder that expert opinion went into the design and was essential in creating what was in reality a highly unusual experiment in the history of yachting. Here is a boat that did, and will always, require the lightest possible combination of sails, halyards, and rigging to succeed at all. Of course, nowadays we have carbon-tube masts, and high-modulus metal, and polymer rigging, and super-light sails. Great as the S-40 boat is, it would be even greater thusly outfitted.

As said, the interior accommodations varied among the built boats. Most also had their galleys aft. And come to think of it, maybe none actually had the quarter berth. Be that as it may, I walked around in an S-40 recently and was extremely impressed with the dainty yet expert joinerwork. Knowing that this design would only work if everything was kept light, I was impressed at just how artfully this was done. It was much like a "fast is fun" Bill Lee boat, but with a familiarly glossy New England yacht ethic.

The interior has surprisingly good headroom. This was accomplished by sophisticated bending of the cabin sole to blend into the hull shape in various corners. Much of the accommodation was thus pushed outward against hull. (That boats so arranged sometimes lack stowage space is a compelling reason for any owner to adopt the cruising mindset of a multihull sailor—leave it home unless you *really* need it.)

I expect the Seguin 40 will be very easy to sail shorthanded and to urge up to hull speed. That's just as well, because for many reasons, not least the intrusion of a huge centerboard trunk, crew lodgings are limited. This isn't a boat for a large crew complement. As the owner of a boat I examined said more than once, "It's one of those boats that parties seven, seats four, and sleeps two." And that's fine by me.

That owner wasn't above asking a few questions along the lines of free consultancy. (He's planning to take his Seguin 40 around the world.) His questions—and more pertinently my considered answers—led me to a few spec-

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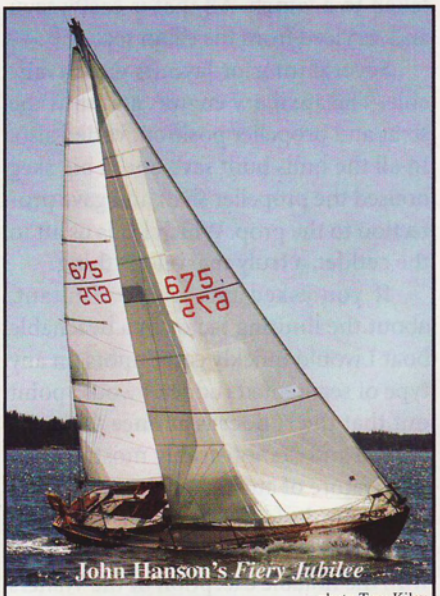

John Hanson's *Fiery Jubilee*
photo Tom Kiley

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ulations as to why there are not dozens of Seguin 40s.

Not specifically related to his questions, but brought on by thinking about them, I would suggest that Maine may have been the best place to build a boat that required disciplined workmanship, but we don't beach our boats here. We're far removed from places where people do, which must have been a severe sales limitation.

The centerboard trunk does impose upon the sanctum-sanctorum of any yacht, the main saloon. Speaking as a consultant, I offered the opinion that moving toward a more high-aspect-ratio, even more laminar-flow centerboard would be one of the changes I'd consider.

The interior of the S-40 is by no means a crowd-pleaser in terms of sumptuous, broadly arrayed luxuriance. If it had the interior of even a Bermuda 40, I have little doubt that the world would have beaten a path to Lyman-Morse's door.

The tiller must be considered a huge detriment for sea duty. My host revealed that his sailing experience with the boat revealed strong helm forces. He even said he had inquired about having a rudder built with a higher-aspect ratio and more balance. I answered in no uncertain terms that in my opinion this would be a huge waste of money and—since strain increases with the square of added span—would substitute real risk for only a mild problem. I cut to the chase. The only reason he had helm forces that would prove wearying as he went around the world was evident on my first inspection. He was trying to steer an extremely high performance 40-foot sailboat with a markedly short tiller. Wheel steering would provide leverage and be far safer and more comfortable at sea. Although it might have been a hard fit back in the early 1980s, there are good ways to tackle installing that wheel nowadays. I'm surprised that all the Seguin 40s haven't been thus upgraded.

I wonder. If the Seguin 40 molds are still in existence down at Lyman-Morse, why on earth doesn't somebody grab all that's great about this benchmark design and eliminate the few things that aren't? A marginally different, more rectangular centerboard could be designed to fit underneath a centerline settee table. It could be hydraulically actuated. That alone would provide for a conventional main cabin settee and would open up the whole to more generous proportions. Add wheel steering and perhaps flatten the cockpit seat tops. The use of modern construction materials in the hull and, particularly, the rig would take a successful experiment of the past century and thus compound excellence upon excellence.

I won't mince words here. A brand-new Lyman-Morse-built Seguin 40 could be a standout—for racing, world cruising, even for duck hunting in the upper Chesapeake. This old set of plans represents, at least to my eye, what could be the most successful yacht design experiment in modern times.

Art Paine, a Maine Boats, Homes & Harbors *contributing editor, is a boat designer, photographer, artist, and writer.*