



BY MICHAEL PETERS

# SIGHTLINES

## Curmudgeon U

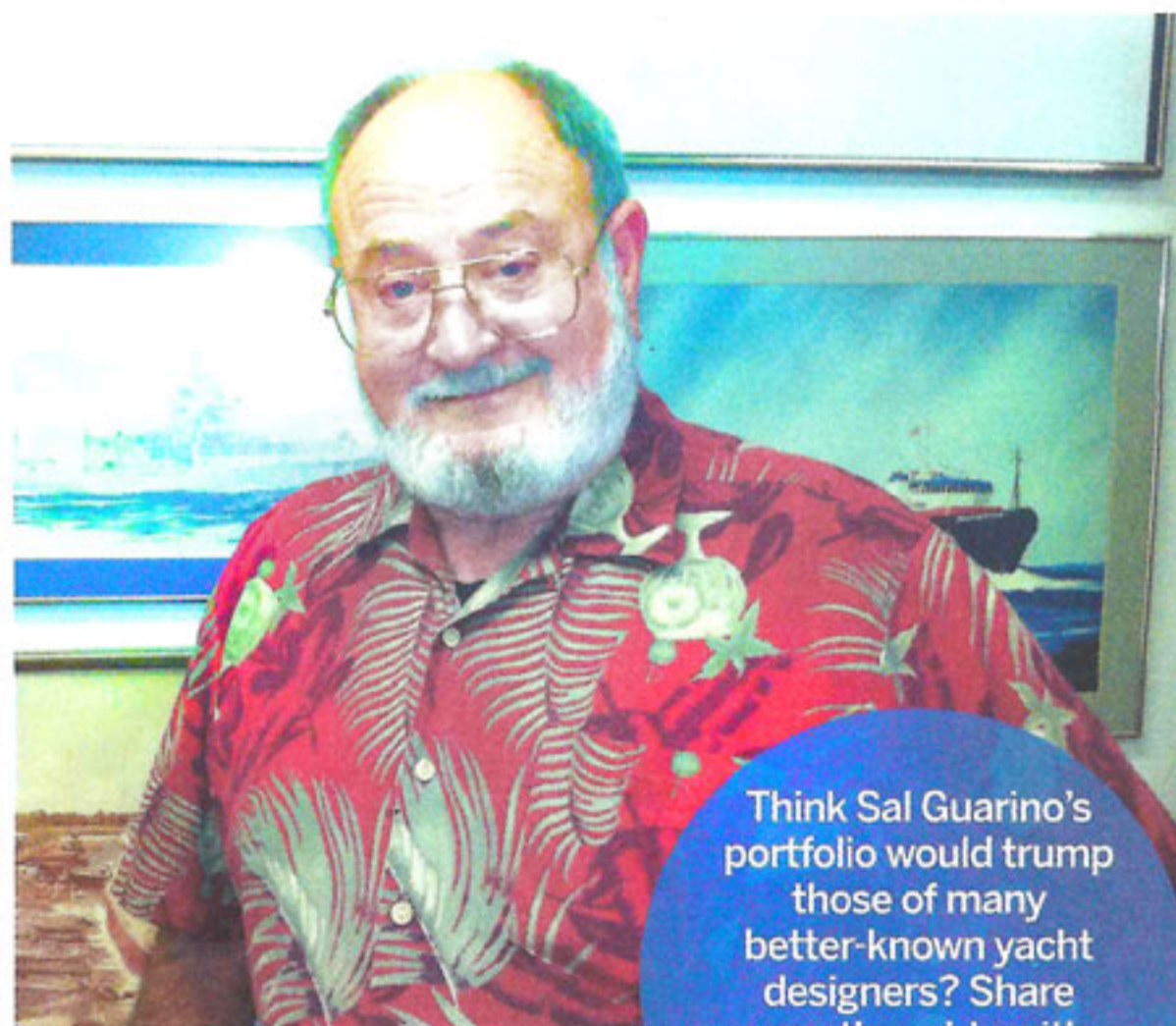
LEARNING NAVAL ARCHITECTURE FROM THE BEST.

If I come across as a bit surly and sarcastic at times, it is because I was taught by the best. I sometimes like to think that I patterned myself after *60 Minutes*'s Andy Rooney, but my curmudgeonly role model is actually my lovably grumpy mentor, Salvatore Guarino. It had been several years since I'd last seen him, but he managed to criticize my car, its color, and even question if my house was nice enough for his overnight stay, all within the first couple of minutes of a recent visit to Sarasota. Sal is certainly not one to hold back his opinions, but his notoriously caustic

comments are always accompanied with a twinkle in his eye. Although much more accomplished than me, Sal remains relatively unknown to most yachtsmen, because he has spent his professional life in relative obscurity designing commercial boats, away from the spotlight so easily shone on yacht designers. He is the best boat designer I have ever known.

Although I am fairly certain that Sal could not pass a PE (Professional Engineers) exam in naval architecture, I am absolutely certain he knows more about the subject than those who wrote the test. He is an old-school naval architect, as in "no school," and was taught hands-on by his mentor George Huet, famed naval architect of the Higgins PT Boats of World War II. Starting at Halter Marine in the early 1960s, Sal learned by building the PT Boats, running them, and changing them. By the time I joined the company in 1978, Halter had become the world's largest commercial boatbuilder, with Sal as the vice president of engineering.

Halter was in the business of building support vessels for the offshore oil industry in the Gulf of Mexico and around the world. Rig workers were paid from the minute they boarded a crew boat, so that meant speed was the name of the game. With Guarino as the head of design in the late '60s and '70s, Halter pioneered vessels as diverse as triple-engine, 101-foot crew boats, surface-effect ships, and the first U.S.-built diesel-electric supply boat. Among others, Halter through the years delivered more than 70 166-foot OSVs



Think Sal Guarino's portfolio would trump those of many better-known yacht designers? Share your thoughts with Michael at [inbox@pmymag.com](mailto:inbox@pmymag.com).

or Offshore Supply Vessels, 70 188-foot OSVs, 30 101-foot crew boats, and 20 78-foot crew boats, along with high-speed patrol boats and Alaskan crab boats, all to Sal's designs. In 1975 Halter built the Guarino-designed 40-plus-knot *American Enterprise*, a 110-foot, triple-waterjet vessel with a centerline gas turbine flanked by two diesels. All of the world's fastest yachts share this same design configuration to this day.

Sal left Halter in 1980 to start his own company, Guarino and Cox ([www.guarino-cox.com](http://www.guarino-cox.com)), and since those days has designed all of Trinity Yachts's hulls. While still concentrating on commercial vessels he also has to his credit such yachts as the 72-foot *S/F Contigo*, the 150-foot *Princess Marla*, the 94-foot *Maloekoe*, and the 185-foot *Samantha Lin*, along with the U. S. Navy's *Mark V* patrol boat. From behind his curtain, he has amassed the most diverse body of work of anyone in his field. Most large planing vessels owe their roots to his concepts and designs. When I was working at Halter, I was privileged to have him as my mentor and lucky enough to co-design with him a 64-foot high-speed patrol boat and a 38-foot racing catamaran. I sucked up everything I could learn from him.

Over at his house during a Fourth of July party in 1980, I became the humbled recipient of my first boat design award. Sal presented me with the IBDOY Award (Italian Boat Design of the Year) in recognition for almost killing my wife and myself in my first stepped-hull racing boat, which we barrel-rolled 360 degrees while making our first turn at 80 mph on the day we launched it. It was an early version of the Darwin Award, but I think it was Sal's way of saying I still had a lot to learn, but he was glad we'd survived. But that was how we did things at Halter. We built them and ran them and changed them until we got it right. We were not a bunch of academics—we were hands-on. I learned from the best and got my degree from my beloved professor Sal Guarino, at Curmudgeon U. □