

Canadian Sailcraft Ltd. CS Yachts: Entrepreneur meets Business

16-year-old George Cuthbertson wrote in a letter to L. Francis Herreshoff saying “All he ever wanted to do was to be a yacht designer. Paul Tennyson only wanted to own his own business and like many aspiring entrepreneurs he cycled through a few dead ends before finding his product. In 1955, just out of school, he started off as car salesman in Toronto, this lasted less than a year and he decided to go independent. Many up and comers in Toronto advertised services as “manufacturer’s agents” i.e. travelling salesman, moving from house to house or business address to the next business address, arriving at the front desk and asking the secretary if he could just have a “few moments of the owner’s time to demonstrate this new...” There were all kinds of manufacturers eager to engage with equally eager franchisors; Tennyson’s first was Criterion Distributors, to sell fine dinnerware china. In 1958 he set up in a tiny office space at 719 Yonge. But most people who had money to buy china already had a collection as a result of china registries, a neat system set up by big department stores where wedding guests would pay for a portion of an agreed china collection as a gift, so there was little leverage for newcomers. This fizzled and his next venture was to be sucked into the flexible marketing hose of Kirby Vacuums. Even then a Kirby was a very expensive machine, the top of the line in the vacuum business and the commission for Kirby’s was one of the highest per dollar in the sales industry, but Kirby had a habit of granting franchises to pretty much anyone who wanted one and it quickly became oversold. In the 1962 *Might’s Directory* Tennyson referred to himself as “Vice-President” of Cyclo-Vac Industries, headquartered in a grim one-story windowless warehouse mall on Canmotor Ave in Etobicoke. Cyclo-Vac lasted a year.

In 1963 a sailboat company appeared in the directory known as Polynesian Sailcraft, a side venture of George Beange, who ran G & C Cartage with his brother. George died relatively young a decade later, it was his wife Edna who became a formidable figure in the community of East York, serving as the then city’s mayor before amalgamation. She died at 98 in 2018, but there was no mention in her obituary of any interest in sailing as a pastime for her or her late husband; the driving force in Polynesian Sailcraft does not appear to be a pastime turned business, but purely an investment. George was partnering with a Helmut Julino in the venture, we know nothing of Mr. Julino, he was not living in Toronto, then or later. There had been a big marketing campaign to sell the latest iteration of *Mutiny on the Bounty*, with Marlon Brando, the images of the *Bounty* itself at full sail and the little native outriggers stuck in the public imagination (the movie poster showing Brando with the future Mrs. Brando wearing only a grass skirt didn’t hurt either). The movie was a very expensive flop; however, it was good

promotion for Tahiti as a tourist destination and helped sell the romance of sailing. By 1966 Polynesian Sailcraft had been moved along to Ben and Marion Morencz, whose main business was Edmor Industries, a window and blind installation firm. The name Polynesian was dropped, the sailboat company was now known as South Wind Sailcraft Ltd. The company's solitary product was a small 12-foot catamaran, a fast sailer, but perhaps a little too much for 1966 Toronto, then the least exotic city on the planet Earth.

In the 1964 *Might's* (the year of the *Directory* is always a year ahead of the data) Paul Tennyson was on his fourth career, selling reinforced fibreglass products, once again, the "VP" of Terraplast Industries Ltd. Terraplast Industries was located at 3 Parnell Ave., like Cyclo-Vac, in yet another grim one-story almost windowless strip warehouse way out in Scarborough (Toronto, East York, Etobicoke, North and East York were all independent municipalities at the time). Joe and Maria Stelter were listed as President and Secretary of Terraplast but neither ever lived in Toronto; I suspect they were running a distributorship in some other city and Tennyson, in spite of his title was once again just a sales agent with a small room with a desk, a phone and product samples (the main non-marine consumer application of fibreglass at the time was ribbed translucent privacy fencing, for backyard pools and such; it discolored quickly in sunlight and was a natural dust magnet, and the product vanished after the wood-fence renaissance of the mid 1970's). The VP thing was probably not Tennyson's idea, it was just part of the overall franchisee pitch, an ego boost to make the salesmen push themselves harder and hopefully impress clients.

A couple of George Cuthbertson's Water Rat sailing dinghy's are still around, I've never been able to find any examples of Polynesian/South Wind's product, the little catamaran known as the Scamper; did it even sell? Under the Morencz's South Wind relocated from 74 Tycos Drive in North York to 100 Penn Drive. At the time Terraplast was located at 5300 Yonge Street, also at that point in North York. There is no question that Tennyson was aware of South Wind, I'm sure he knocked on every door of every business with any remote interest in fibreglass products. He took over the company in 1967 and the name left the warm winds of Polynesia and returned to colder waters, in it's final incarnation as Canadian Sailcraft Ltd. He discontinued the catamaran and engaged Cuthbertson & Cassian to design a 15-foot day sailer named the Caprice. The Caprice was a success and in 1971 CS engaged English naval architect John Butler (Cuthbertson was in the middle of forming the C & C combine and now was a dominant competitor) came out with a trailerable boat called the CS 22. It had a cuddy cabin and was CS's real entry into the sailboat big leagues. It was a hit and 500 were built. Unlike the Scamper and the Caprice, you could take this out onto big Lake Ontario, or any body of water. CS was on

it's way. In 1973 Tennyson moved from the cramped space at 5300 Yonge out to a 20,000 square foot plant in Brampton. His financing may have been the bank, there may have been an investor; a Matthew Stirling was mentioned as a "co-founder" of Canadian Sailcraft, but I have been unable to find any information about such as person; there is no Matthew Stirling listed in Toronto from 1950-75, no such person is mentioned in the considerable online databases of Canadian sailing.

CS Yachts: The human factor

Therefore, all metal attachments on the boats would be attached to wood, usually a laminated plywood beam to provide something solid for the bolts and screw nails to attach to. Once the hull and deck had been fitted together, then it was the masts and rigging, which were straightforward affairs of drill and bolt. Now you have a boat that can sail, the last part is about the people who are on the boat, and how are they to interact with it, both out sailing, and cruising. CS Yachts, known as Canadian Sailcraft took special attention to what are now referred to as "human factors".



CS 22 I'm guessing Lac DesChenes, Ottawa Gatineau Photo Adam Hunt

CS Yachts had, so far as I could see, no grand ambitions to dominate the global sailboat industry; they seemed happy to be a successful small manufacturing business. They didn't aspire to become racing superstars. Paul Tennyson did not see much future in the existing product, a small catamaran called the Scamper and went to Cuthbertson and Cassian and had them design an ultralight 14-foot 250 lb racing cat named the Caprice. Tennyson remains a mysterious person in the industry, he had no personal sailing interests that we know of, he grew up in dreary old landlocked Brampton, a small city north of Toronto, a half hour drive to Lake Ontario. He never was a member of a club, nor is there any history of him hanging out with the other Toronto yachties or crewing a racer. His interest in CS Yachts was simply running a company making a quality product. He wasn't invited to join the C & C project, in spite of his background in fibreglass fabrication and success in building and selling the Caprice model, although he was still pretty small potatoes in 1969. Although C & C came on a dominating competitor to CS, CS simply went on as if nothing had happened, bringing out the CS 22 in 1971 and CS 27 in 1975, both models sold around 500 units each over their respective lifespans.



Paul Tennyson attends a champagne launch of one of his boats. The boat will still need work on stepping the masts and setting up the rigging. The boats were built in Brampton, so they had to be trucked to the waterside and put in the water before all the work could be completed.

The designer Steve Killing (another C & C design team emeritus), on the CS philosophy:

CS builds safe, comfortable cruising boats that perform well. No weird IOR or MORC [offshore racing] stuff. If you take the present CS line of boats in one hand and Tony Castro's various designs in the other and clap your hands, you get the new 30. Castro's for CS and added substantially to the available space aft. The cabin house has a family resemblance to the 33 and the 36 but, as the designer puts it, is "a little more streamlined." Everyone involved with the project is excited about the cockpit. Lots of angles and slopes and nice round corners for snoozing in. If you find all the salesmen asleep in the cockpit at the next boat show, you'll know it worked. When I examine a new boat, I never worry about stating the obvious- like "Look at the size of that berth!" The quarter berth is more than generous. Unfortunately, I don't have

access to the view that really tells the story. How much room is there under the cockpit sole for your feet, what with steering sheaves and all? No one at the shop could give me a dimension, but they say it is just fine. I guess I can't argue with that. The head is identical in layout to the 33. You begin to wonder, since so much of the layout is the same as the 33, how they have managed to squeeze it all in. Much credit goes to Castro and the production team.



The CS 27 Photo Adam Hunt

It is apparent that the magic selling point for CS Yachts, was as much on the inside as the outside, they had an innate understanding of, and desire to focus on what later became known as ergonomics, or the capacity of a certain object or space to work with the shape and movement of a human body as noted in this critique of the CS 36, brought out in 1979:

The aim of the design was pretty standard: 36-ft cruiser/racer with good accommodations. How many dozens of yachts claim to fill that bill? Yet, as [designer Ray] Wall said, "This is a category everyone wants to fill, but surprisingly there aren't many around with really good accommodations."

A capsule description of the interior _ teak joinery, fibreglass modules, teak-and-holly sole _ doesn't do it justice. As one would expect, it's the designer's particular talent that turns an ordinary concept into something deserving close attention. There is nothing unusual about the layout.

A glance at the interior plan will show that Wall has followed fairly standard practice here. But a walk through the cabin demonstrates the importance of first-class design and attention to human proportions. It's not so much the way the interior looks as the way everything, including hand-holds and elbow room, seems to be just in the right spot. This is a cabin that can be lived in even though it has only the basic elements of a standard interior for a 36-footer.

Extra details it does have. For example, the forward cabin is usually considered adequate if it has some drawers under the bunks. Here Wall has designed a set of drawers with cupboard and mirror that will serve the crew well when all five or six are cleaning up for dinner. There's nothing complicated or awkward about it; it just fits right in.

The same attitude is evident in the head. Only a few yachts have a teak sole grating, but there is nothing better for the shower stall. Instead of draining water into the bilge as has been done on some recent designs, the shower sump has its own electric pump. A handhold is well-placed near the head, and this head is one of the few with enough knee room to be used underway with the door closed.

The large navigation table is comfortable to use, the shelf space above it is big enough to accommodate radio, Loran, and several volumes of reference books. Plenty of natural light reaches the table, probably reflected from the white-fiberglass cabin side.



The CS 36 Photo Adam Hunt

CS would go on to sell 400 of the 36-model introduced in 1978, and 450 of the 33-model brought out the next year. Sometimes slow and comfy wins the race. CS remained private, boats left the yard on a flatbed to be launched at a marina, but how many, and how profitable was this enterprise. No one but the company and the government knew, and they could not tell. On the other hand, C & C was quite literally an open book, and it was clear that this was a fast-growing industry, and a product that naturally lent itself to high-speed, high-volume production. CS and C & C began to attract competitors; North American Fibreglass Mouldings, Goman Boat Ltd., Hullmaster, Skene Boats, Ouyang Boat Works, Sirocco Boatworks and Fibreglass and Bayfield Boat Works. After giving J. J. Taylor a new lease on business life with the Contessa, Allen Nye Scott left in 1975 to start his own boatbuilding enterprise, moving into the empty fabrication shop of the former Belleville Marine Yard Ltd. Morch himself had bought back the family marina from C & C Yachts in 1973 and ran it until 2007, when he sold the property to the Province of Ontario. It is now the site of Crate Marine. Jack Martin lost interest in finding a replacement manager and sold J. J. Taylor to Hens Gaastra, the grandson of Douwe Gaastra, a famed sailmaker from the Netherlands. Gaastra had shown interest in branching out from sailmaking to boatbuilding, but his passion for this project faded and by 1979 he sold it to its next, and ultimately last owner, Gary Bannister. Bannister sold the iconic (and by now, given exorbitant property taxes and City of Toronto's eternal plan to "revitalize" the downtown waterfront, no longer practical) location and moved the business to the landlocked, but more reasonably priced industrial suburbs of Rexdale.



CS 36 Winter storage Photo Adam Hunt

CS Yachts: 1985-1993 Full sail ahead

Paul Tennyson in the new expanded facility, the finishing and fitting out section of the plant. All CS boats had the front facing hatch on the deck.

Grim as the mid-eighties were, not all were convinced the end was near. As the yacht market appeared to be faltering in the mid-1980's and many builders were in a reflective mood, CS Yachts was thinking big. Canadian Sailcraft was always the quiet one in the world of yacht building; no dramatics, no foreign factories, no racing victories or losses, no larger-than-life characters, no wild rides to the Canadian border to escape the Sheriff of Edenton, as with Gil Bibby and Grampian Boats. It had a modest line of just seven models up to 1985 compared to C & C's crazy sprawl of over 60.





Mid- 1980's CS 36 Merlin followed by CS 30 "Kelsea" on Lac DesChenes, Ottawa/Gatineau Photos Adam Hunt

For this program, CS hired a big gun in the boat design world named Tony Castro. Antonio de Mello e Castro was actually a Portuguese nobleman, a *conde* and *visconde* in his birth country, but his vocation led him to recreational boats. He was already well known on the industry, working out a design shop in Hamble le Rice in the United Kingdom. He provided the next generation of designs for the mid-late 80's CS line, the 30, 34, 36 Merlin, 40, and 44.

The CS 30 had been brought out in 1984, it was a hit and would sell 500 units. CS Yachts had it's highest production ever in 1986, with 175 boats going out the door and Paul Tennyson was convinced the market would only grow and moved CS operations to much larger 100,000 square foot facility. Along with this he commissioned a new line of big boats, the CS 44, of which only one was built in 1985, the more successful CS 36 Merlin, introduced in 1986, of which 100 were sold, the CS 40 which appeared in 1987 and was discontinued in 1988 and the biggest of all, the CS 50 designed, this time by German Frers, another star designer from Argentina. Sailboatdata.com says one was built, another blog claims 4 were built, there is one photograph of a stunning yacht at a dock, it certainly looks long enough and appears to be consistent in appearance with line drawing available, but this, even if it is for real, is the only photograph I could ever find. There is also one online photo of the CS 40 for sale on a website, but there is no date. For all the costs of engaging outside superstar designers like Castro and Frers, building the plugs and the moulds, and then only ever building one or possibly 2 boats, one gets the impression of determined vision to reach a luxury market that simply would not show up. There was talk of a substantial deal with a Danish yacht distributor but either the deal didn't happen, or the sales simply weren't there, most likely the latter, the oversupply of fibreglass sailboats was a worldwide problem. Middle classes were being rapidly built up in Asia, but most of the time the luxury purchase was a car, often for the first time in the family history. It may have been too much, CS apparently had trouble paying the general contractor of the new plant, Bird Construction, one of the largest commercial builders in Canada.

Indexed As: Bird Construction Co. v. C.S. Yachts Ltd. and Tennyson

Ontario Court of Appeal
Goodman, Grange and Finlayson, JJ.A.
April 2, 1990.

Summary:

By ex parte order, Dunlap, J., declared that the plaintiff's claim for lien had expired and ordered it discharged. Dunlap, J., further ordered that the plaintiff's certificate of action be vacated and the entire action dismissed. The plaintiff applied to set aside the ex parte order.

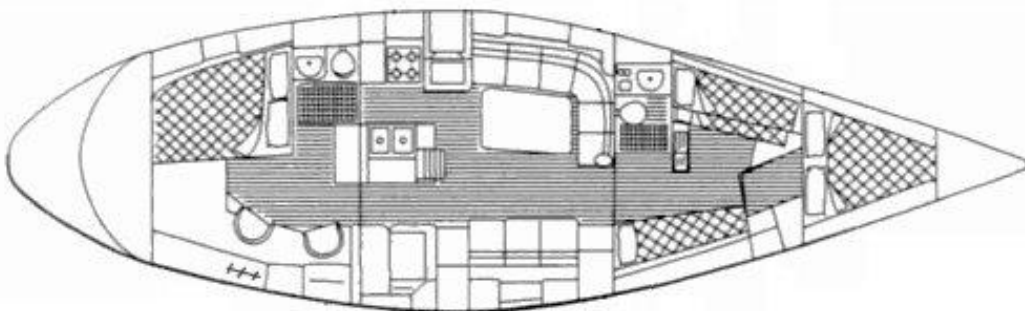
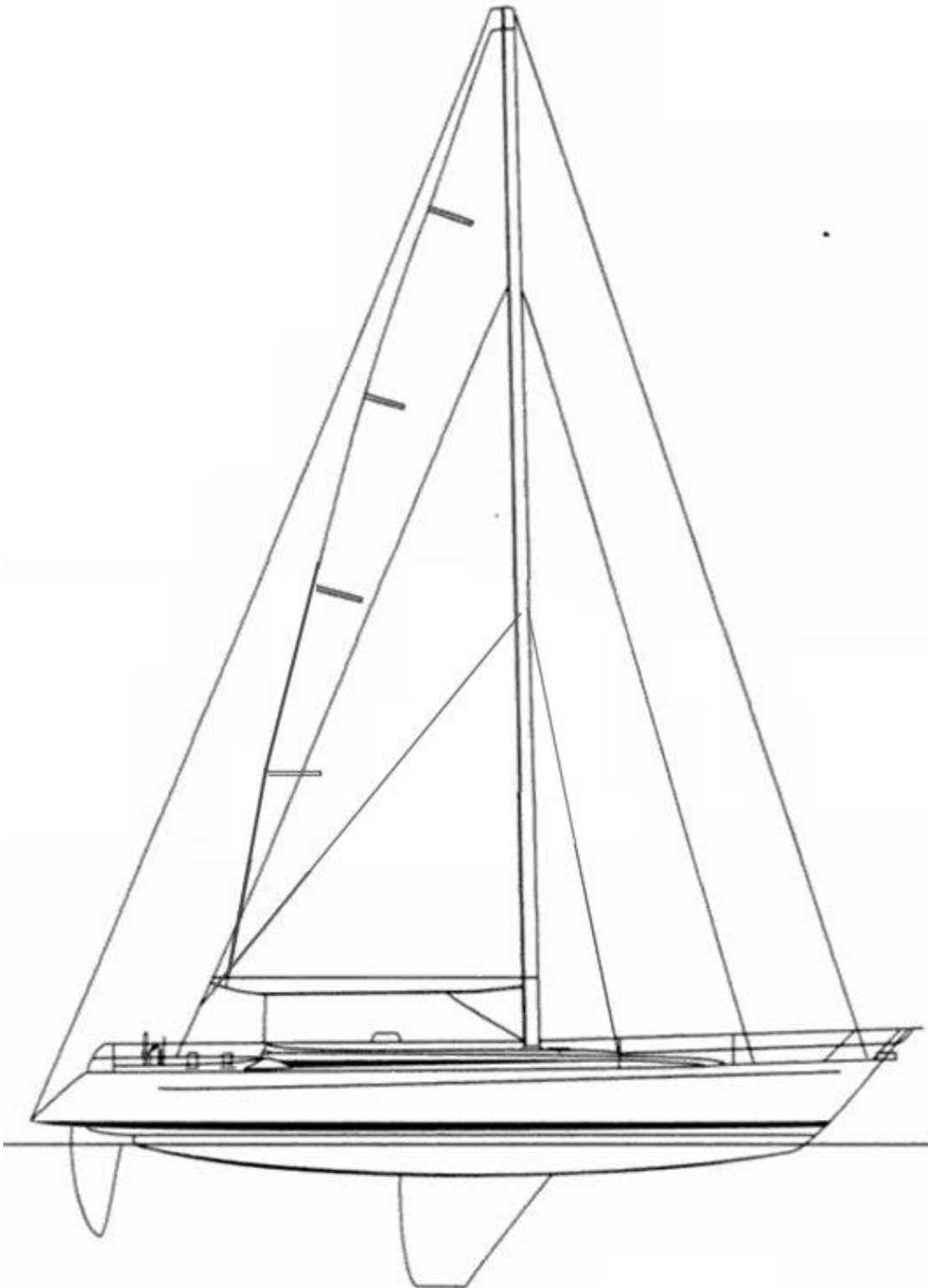
West, J., dismissed the application and purported to confirm Dunlap, J.'s, order. The plaintiff appealed to the Court of Appeal.

The Ontario Court of Appeal held that it lacked jurisdiction and ordered that the appeal be transferred to the Divisional Court.

Courts - Topic 7504

Provincial courts - Ontario - Supreme Court - Divisional Court - Jurisdiction - Respecting appeals from final orders - By ex parte order, Dunlap, J., decided that the plaintiff's lien had expired and ordered it discharged and the action dismissed - On appeal, West, J., dismissed the plaintiff's motion to set aside the order and purported to confirm it - Both orders finally disposed of the plaintiff's action without a trial having occurred - The Ontario Court of Appeal held that West, J.'s, order constituted a "judgment" under s. 73(1) of the Construction Lien Act, which was appealable to the Divisional Court rather than to the Court of Appeal - See paragraphs 4 to 11.

Bird had put a lien on the plant but hemmed and hawed and waited too long to do anything with it and in 1990, the Ontario Court of Appeal dismissed the request as time for such action had run out. If you have payment issue with another party, you can attach a lien to the asset for which you have billed for services, but you have to actively pursue some finalizing action, such as forcing a property sale to recover the funds, or some other way of satisfying monies owed to you; it doesn't last forever. It was a win for CS, but the inference was one of decline and trouble, and in 1992, Tennyson finally called it and wound up the company. Of the original "big three" only C & C was still around, although whether it was actually functioning at all, particularly in 1992, was on an open question.



The CS 50 line plan sailboatdata.com



The only photograph of a CS 50, or is it? Not to be confused with Contest Yachts own “CS 50” model CS West owners association