

DECEMBER 1974/JANUARY 1975

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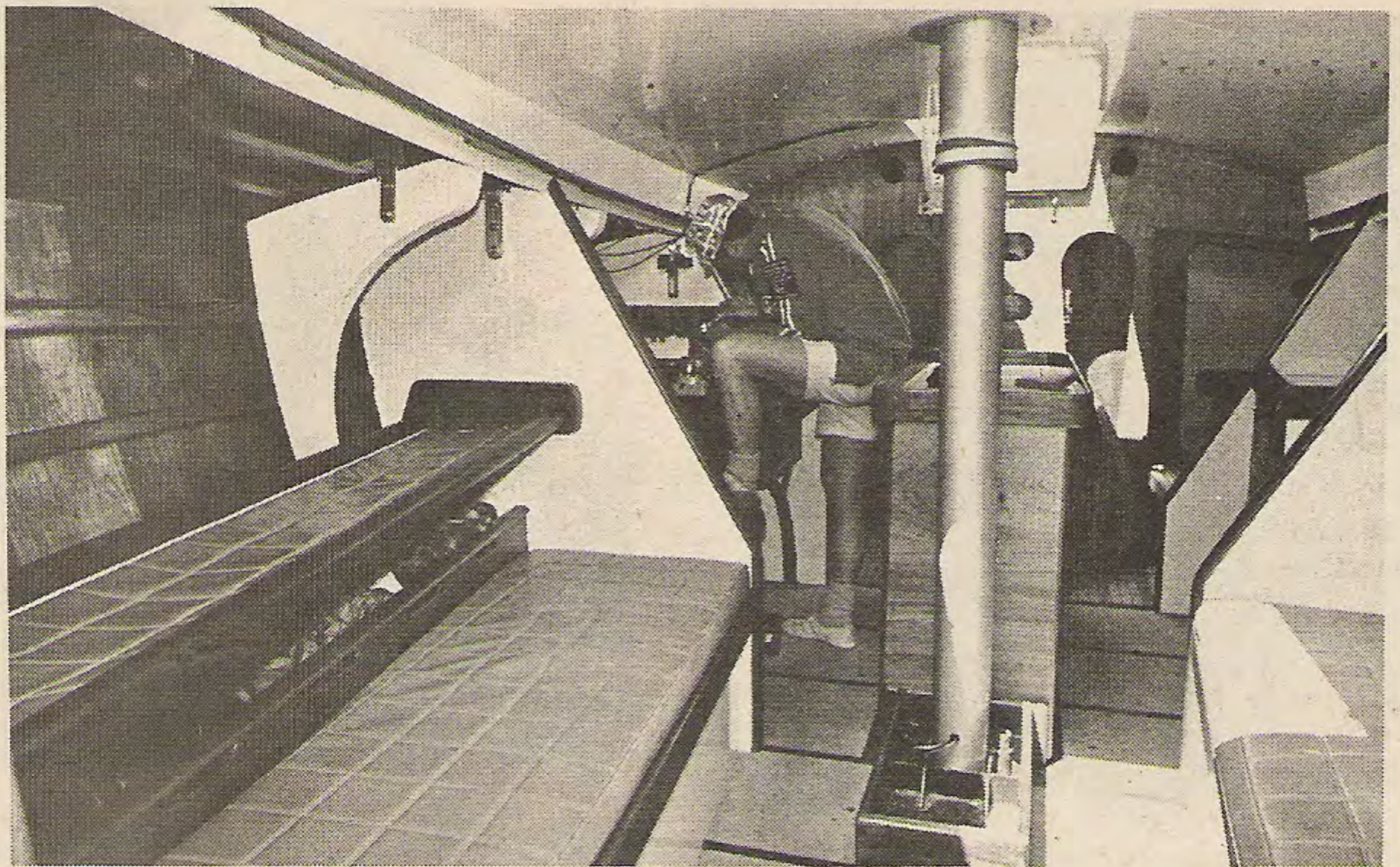
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TRAILER SAILER, QUARTER TONNER, RUNABOUT AND DINGHY BOAT TESTS • DON'T LOOK NOW, ETHEL, IT'S THE SIREAKER! • RACING TUNNEL-HULLS IN COLOUR • JOHN SPENCER'S NEW WHISPERS • 52FT FRANK PELIN STEEL KETCH FOR AMATEUR CONSTRUCTION





The chemical toilet is also right for'ard. The area is used for sail stowage and when the engine cover is down it makes for easy access to the for'ard hatch for the sail handlers



View aft from the for'ard cabin



The galley is on the port side of the central bench unit, opposite the chart table. Further aft on each side is a wooden seat and outside them are quarter berths. Wet weather gear stowage is on the centre line

boats with which Don Senior has had plenty of experience.

Planking of the hard chine hull is three skins of $\frac{1}{4}$ in marine ply over $1\frac{3}{4}$ x $1\frac{3}{8}$ in stringers and $3\frac{1}{4}$ x $1\frac{3}{8}$ in frames. Gunwales and chines are also $3\frac{1}{4}$ x $1\frac{3}{8}$ in. The keelson is 13 x $2\frac{1}{4}$ in sapele and the sister keelson is 13 x 3 in and 21 ft long.

Decks are two layers of $\frac{1}{4}$ in marine ply overlaid with $\frac{1}{4}$ in teak. The cabin top is four layers of $\frac{1}{4}$ in marine ply plus $\frac{1}{4}$ in teak.

The hull was sheathed in 6 oz fibreglass cloth and Epiglass 90 resin and finished in Epiglass Reaction Lacquer Schooner Green (known to his fans as "Spencer racing green"). The bottom is painted with Epiglass E type antifouling Sunset gold and Hydron Speed Coat. The crew came up from

Wellington in the weekends to do the painting.

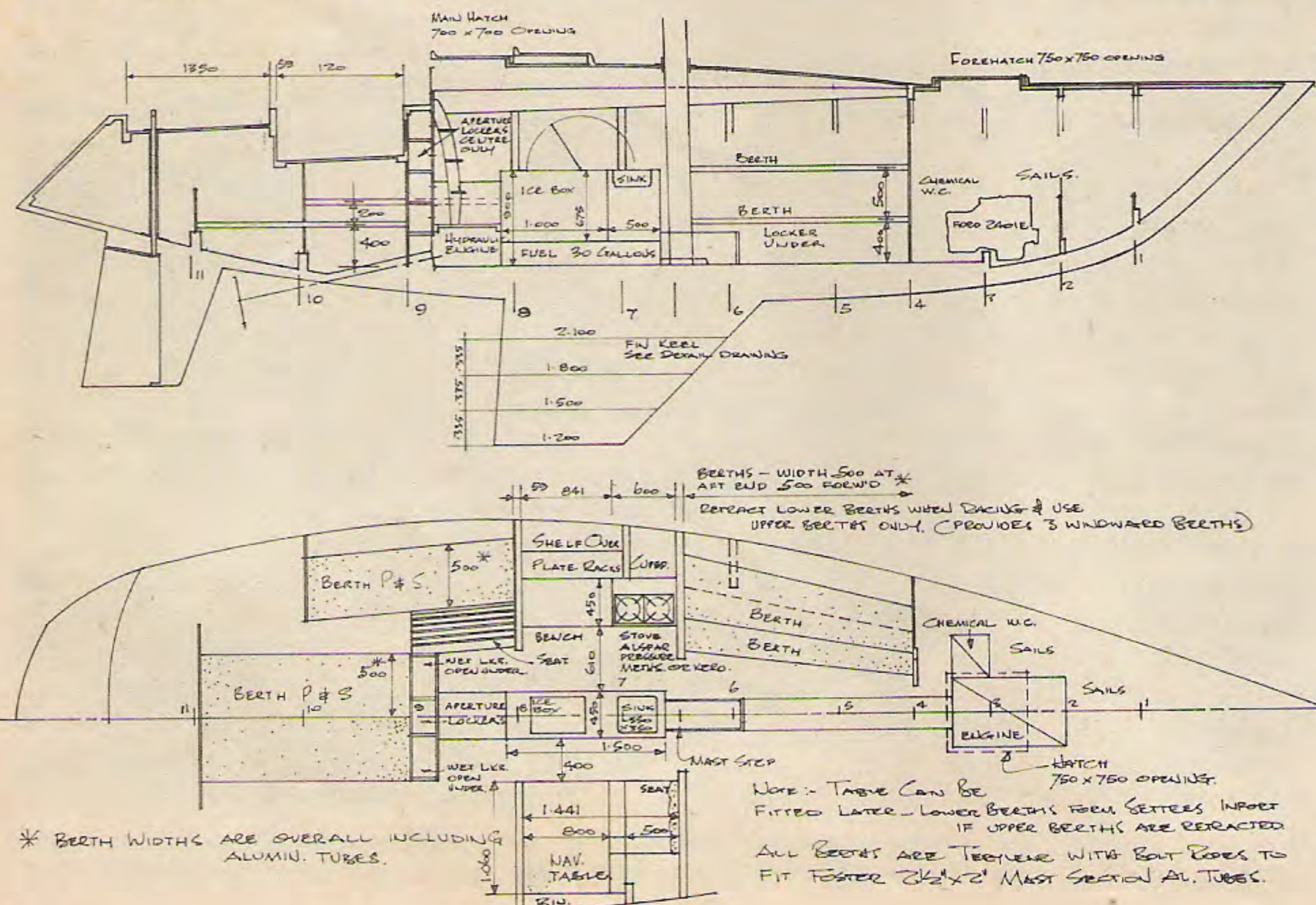
Cabin joinery is mahogany with a satin finish and squabs and root berths were made by Hoods.

The fabricated hollow steel keel and rudder and skeg were made by Bob Moody. The keel is $\frac{3}{16}$ in plate on the sides with a $\frac{3}{8}$ in top plate and $\frac{1}{2}$ in on the bottom. The rudder and skeg are $\frac{1}{8}$ in plate. The keel is held on with nine 1 in steel bolts with the plate that forms the base for the fuel tank and mast step forming a washer for the nuts inside the boat.

The fuel tank holds 30 gallons of diesel and 50 gallons of water are carried in flexible fabric bladder-type tanks.

The motor is right for'ard for reasons of weight distribution. It is a high-speed German Ford marine diesel capable of turning out 60 hp at 000 rpm. It is coupled to a standard Volvo Penta hydraulic unit in the normal position aft. This takes 42 hp maximum and drives an 18 x 11 Donco folding prop.

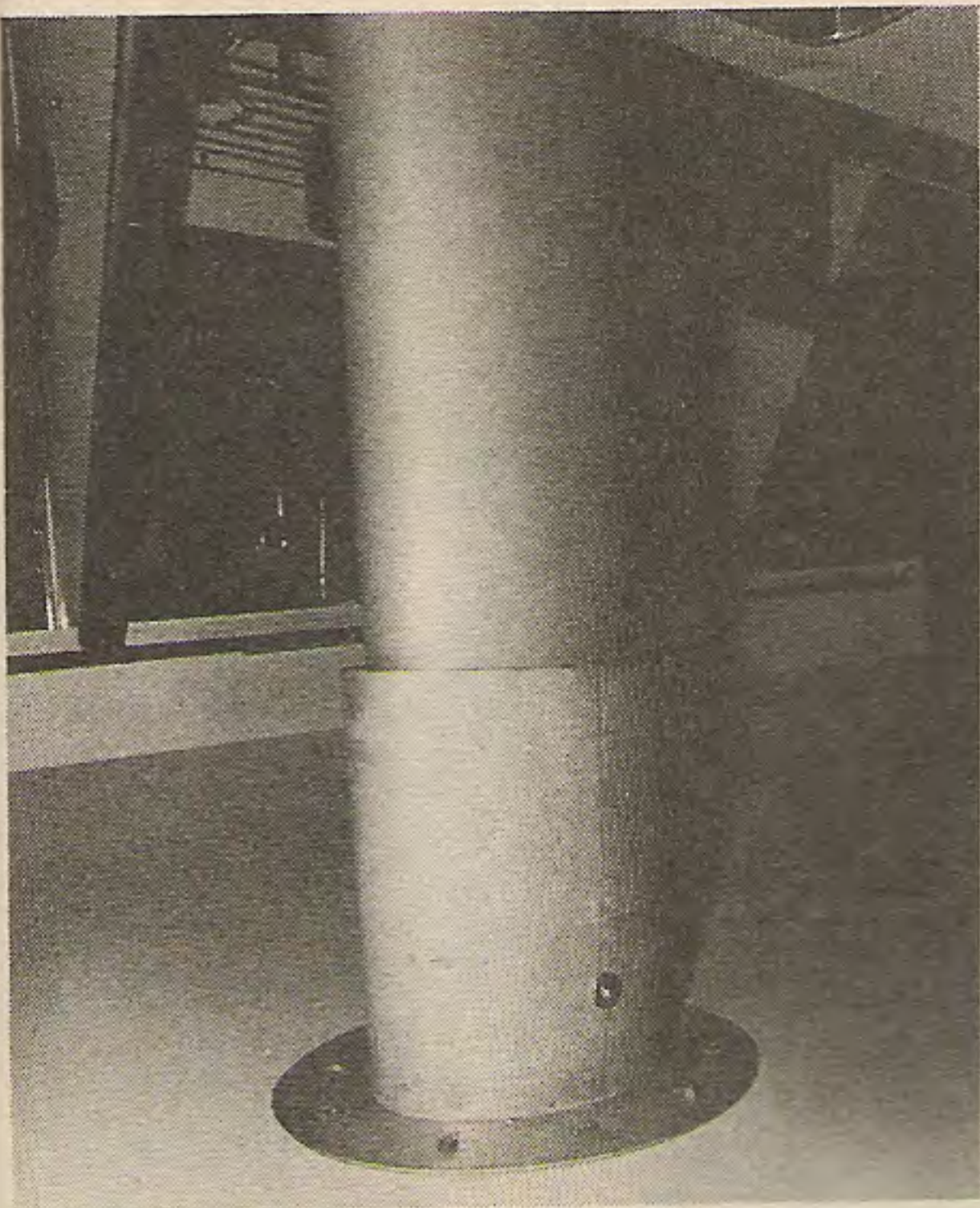
The engine cooling water has the only underwater through-hull opening — all discharges are through the transom and a chemical toilet is fitted.



FACTS

WHISPERS OF WELLINGTON

Designer	John Spencer
Builder	Don Senior
Owners	Syndicate/Geoff Stagg
Construction	Ply
LOA	40 ft
LWL	32 ft
Beam	12 ft 3 in
Draught	6 ft 7 in
Displacement	7.25 tons
IOR rating	31.2 ft
IOR rig measurement	I = 50 ft P = 44.6 ft J = 17.2 ft E = 12 ft



Mast collar extends below decks and a ½ in stainless steel pin under the small keeper plate transfers the load from blocks on the deck plate to the mast

She just powers through it where the old *Whispers* you could feel being stopped at times."

Whispers II rated 37.9 ft and the new boat rates 31.2 ft (the Admirals Cup minimum is 30 ft).

"We've got a young crew," says Geoff, "mostly from centreboarders and it's no trouble for them to change their ways and adapt."

Navigator is Bryan (Jazz) Jaspers who was in *Whispers II* in most of her offshore races. John Mines of the foredeck did all the engineering in the new boat. Bryan Coleman is a three-times Sanders Cup winner and ex-national Javelin title holder. He has his own 40 ft Spencer-designed keeler *Aztec* in Wellington.

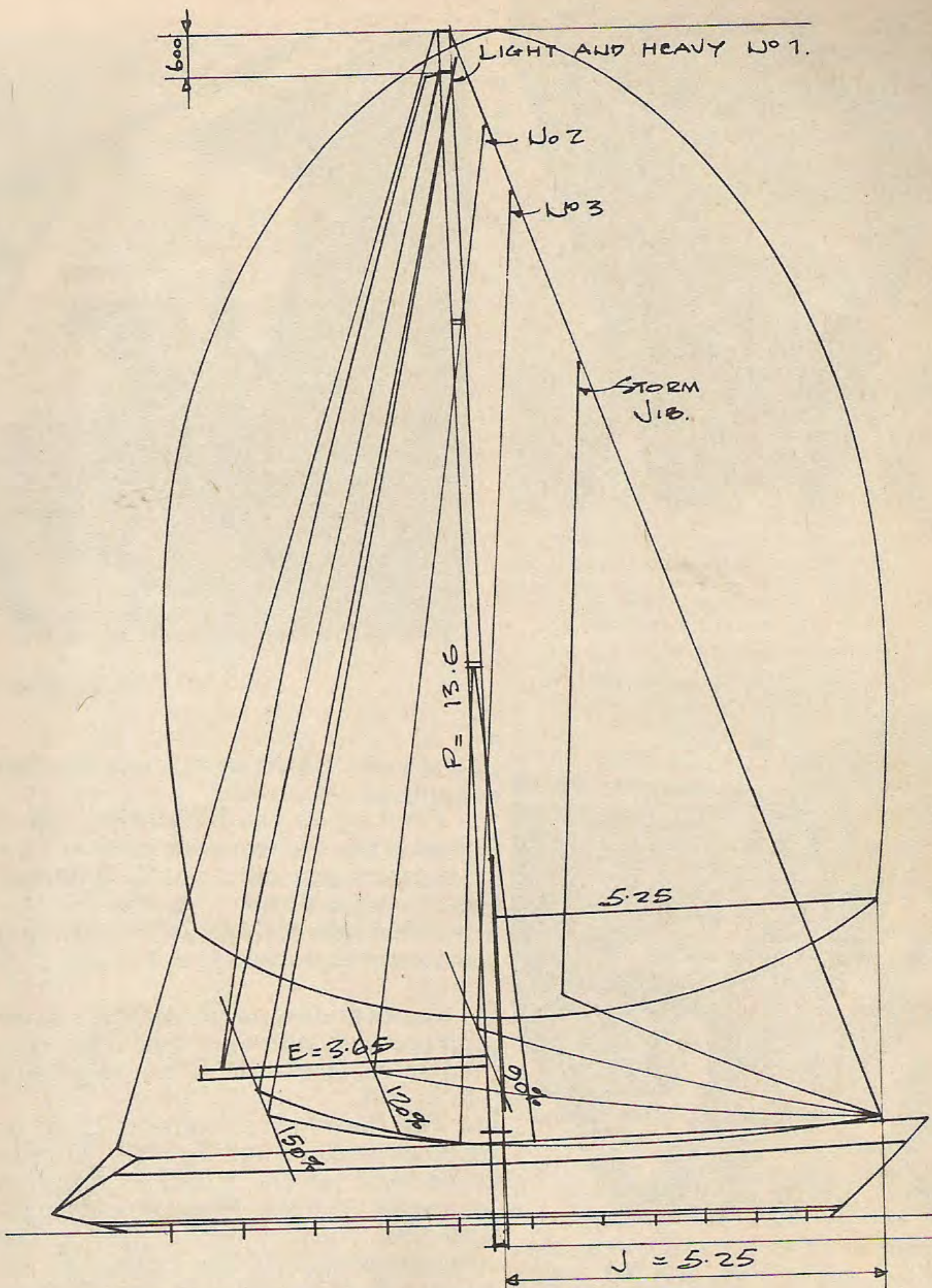
Then there are Andrew Stagg, Geoff's brother, Graeme Zorn, Chris Crawford, John Oldfield and Peter Atkinson — all as dedicated to keeping up with Geoff Stagg as Stagg is dedicated to keeping ahead of the opposition.

Built in 14 weeks

If *Whispers of Wellington* sails as fast as she was built, she will be a real flyer. She was completed in 14 weeks by Don Senior working single-handed except for some weekend help from Warren Dawson.

Don is one of three Seniors (his father Bill and his brother Bob were the other two) who built *Buccaneer* with John McCormick. Since then Don has been working with John Spencer and he was in charge of building the 69 ft American schooner *New World*. *Whispers of Wellington* is his first job since he decided to go out on his own. The finish is first-class and nobody would call it a rush job.

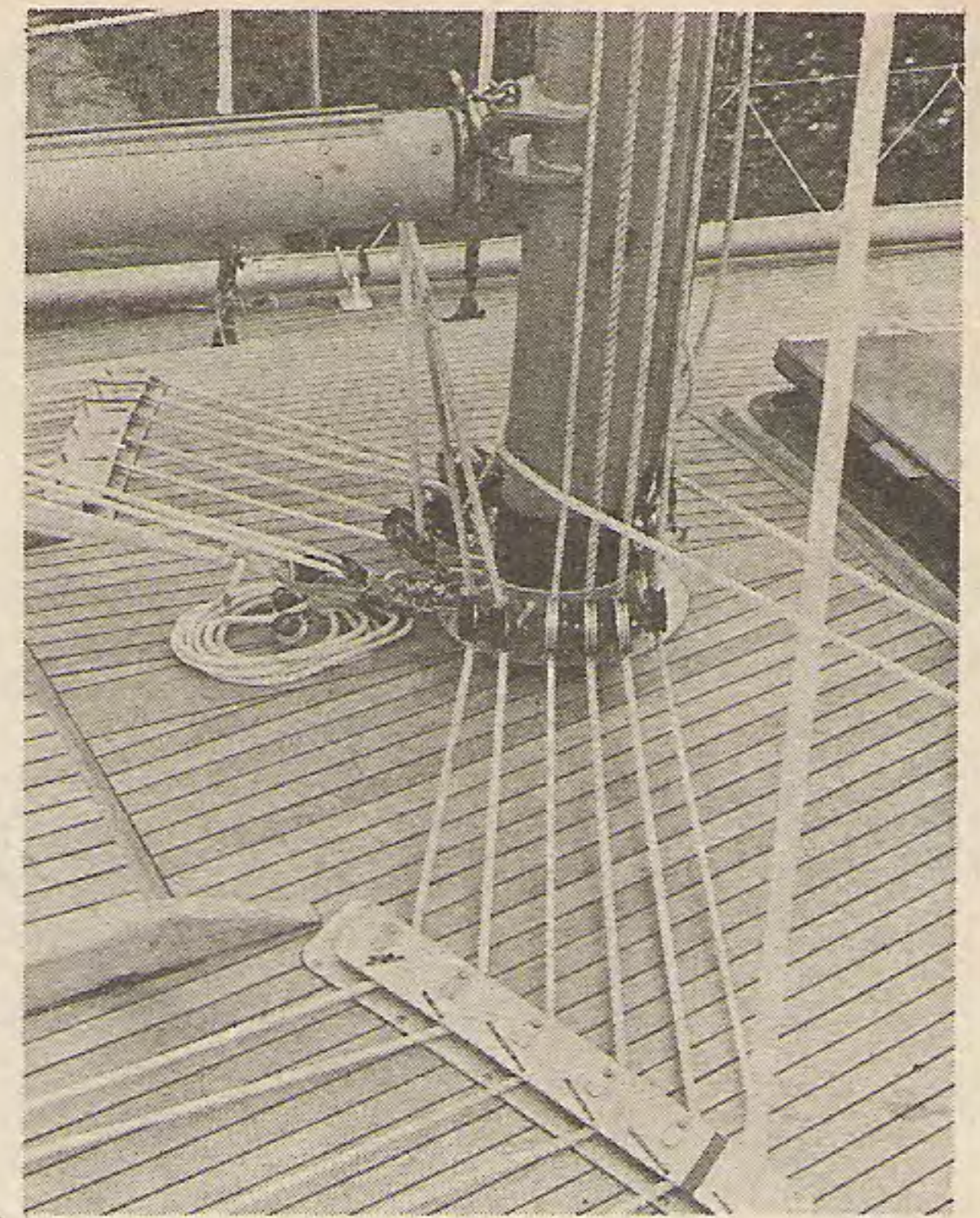
Some of the credit should go to the simple construction of the Spencer



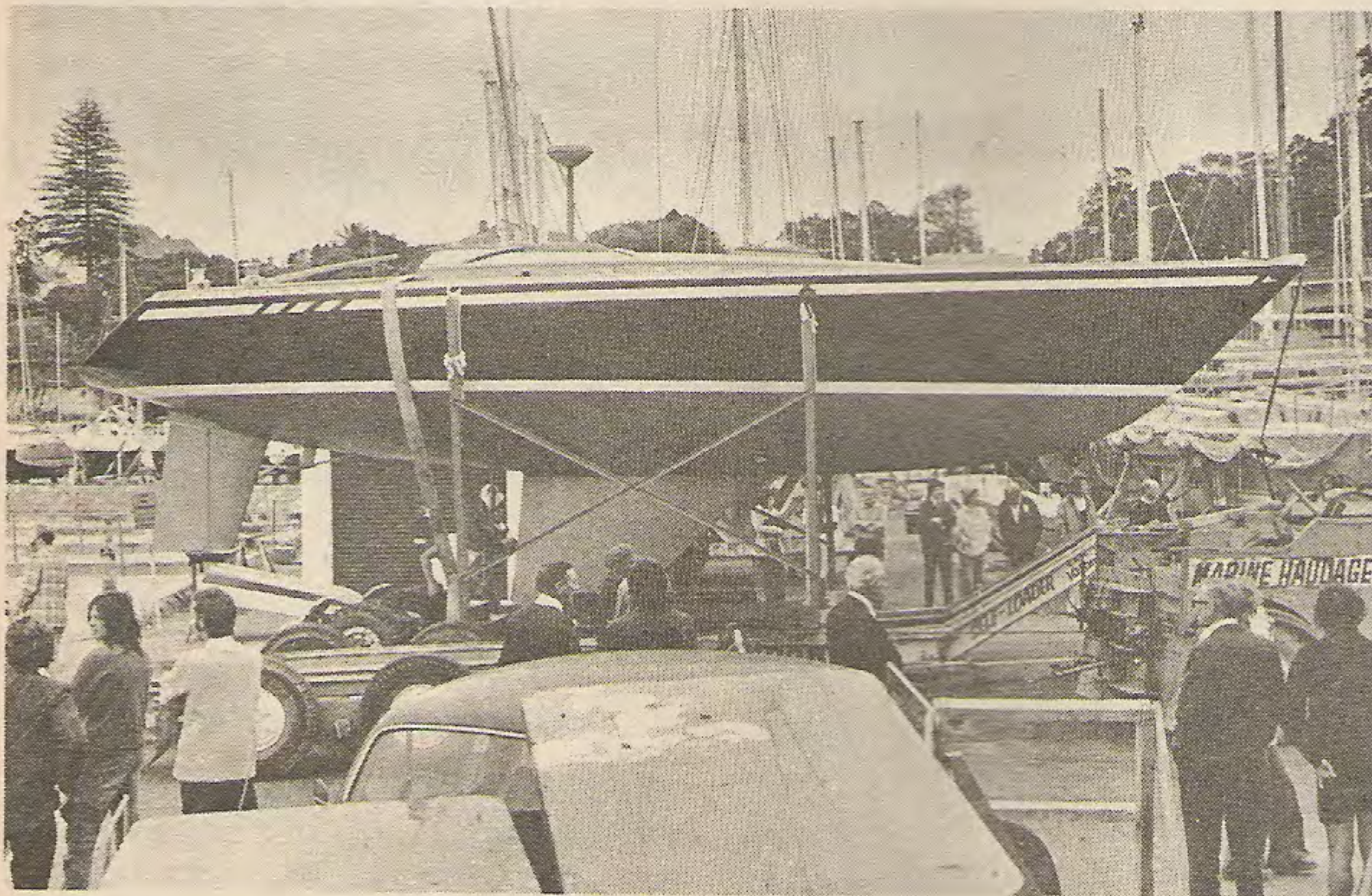
Navigator Jazz Jaspers at the navigation table. Behind him can be seen the chainplates placed well inboard and fastened below decks to steel brackets which carry the load down the topsides



Don Senior tightening the keel bolt nuts in the fabricated steel unit that, with its top on, acts as the fuel tank, the extension forward also being the mast step. The whole is covered by a central "island" sink bench and ice-box unit



Halyards, topping lifts and downhauls are all led aft from blocks on mast collar



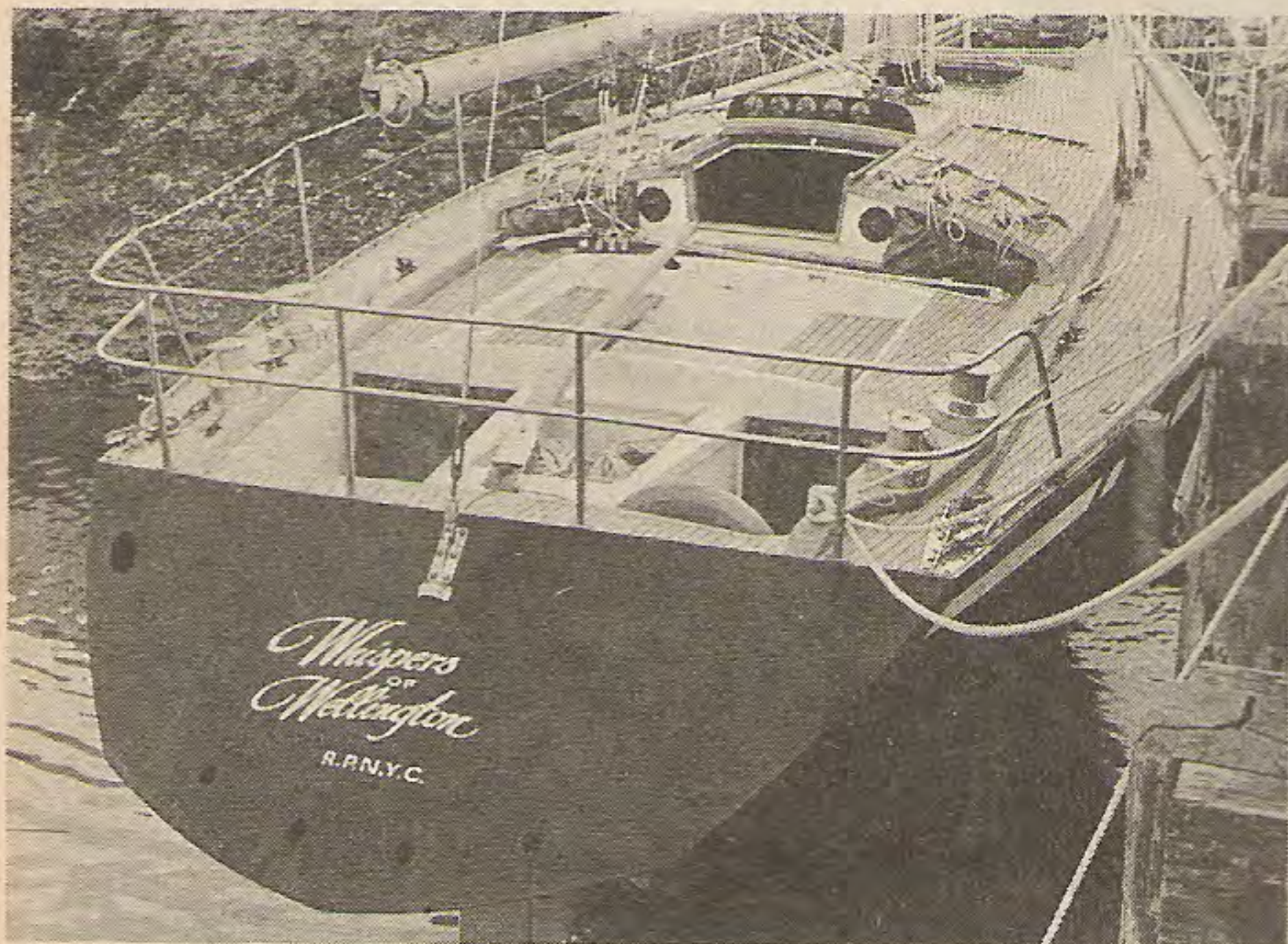
Showing off her underwater shape, the barely visible hard chine and keel hung well aft

He raced to Noumea, in the Sydney-Hobart, across the Tasman, in innumerable local coastal events in which he broke the course records from Wellington to Gisborne, Akaroa and Nelson, and capped a remarkable career by being overall winner of the 1973 Auckland-Suva race. They also won the Wellington IOR championship and their club championship. All this although *Whispers II* was anything but an IOR boat.

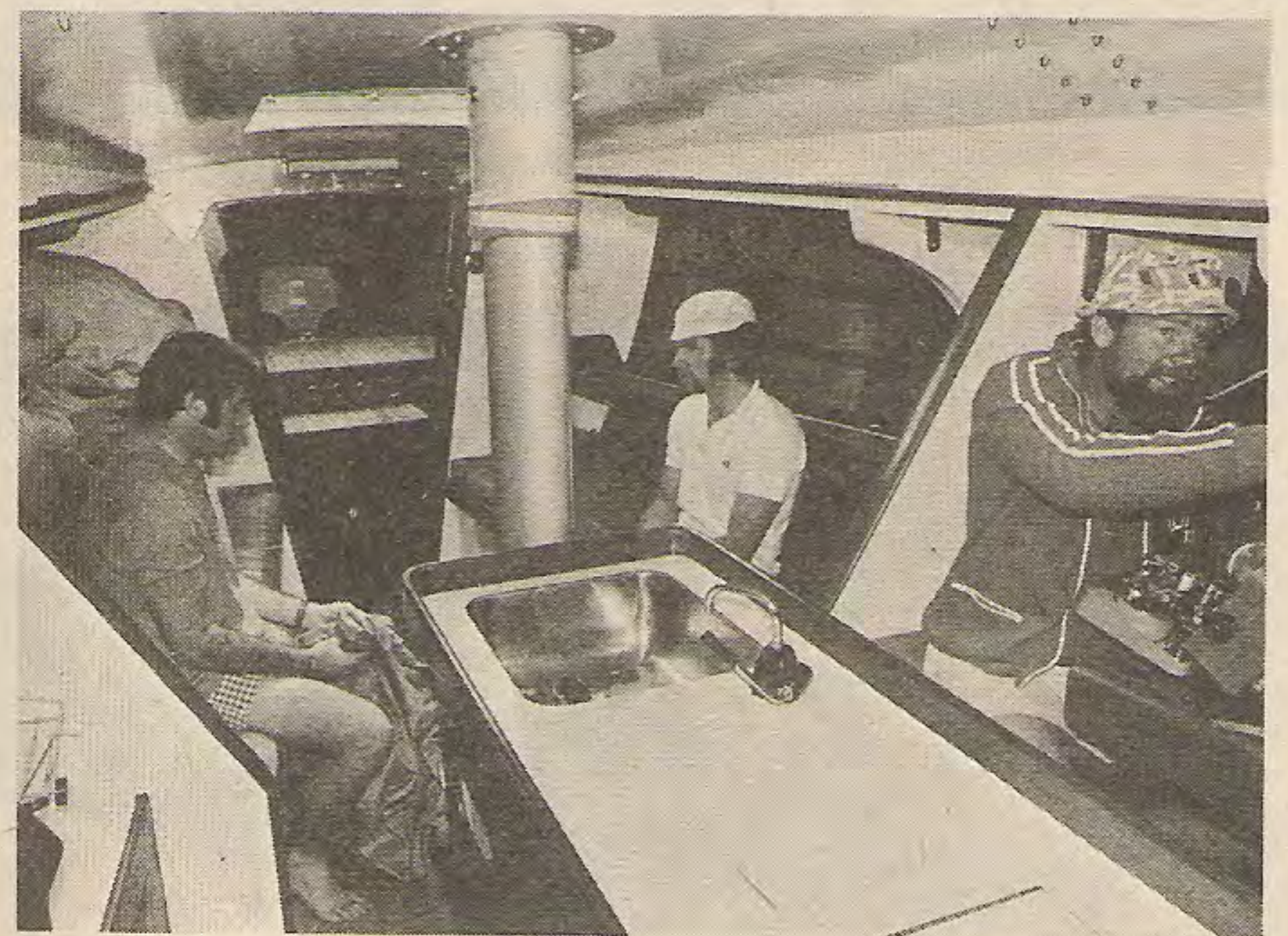
"The old *Whispers II* is an incredible boat — a phenomenal boat," says Stagg. "She always seemed to be going even faster. And she handles so easily you can do anything with her."

"Now we have come from an under-canvased long waterline boat to an over-canvased short waterline boat. It's a funny transition for all of us."

"But by comparison the new boat is like a bulldozer on the wind and in a sea."



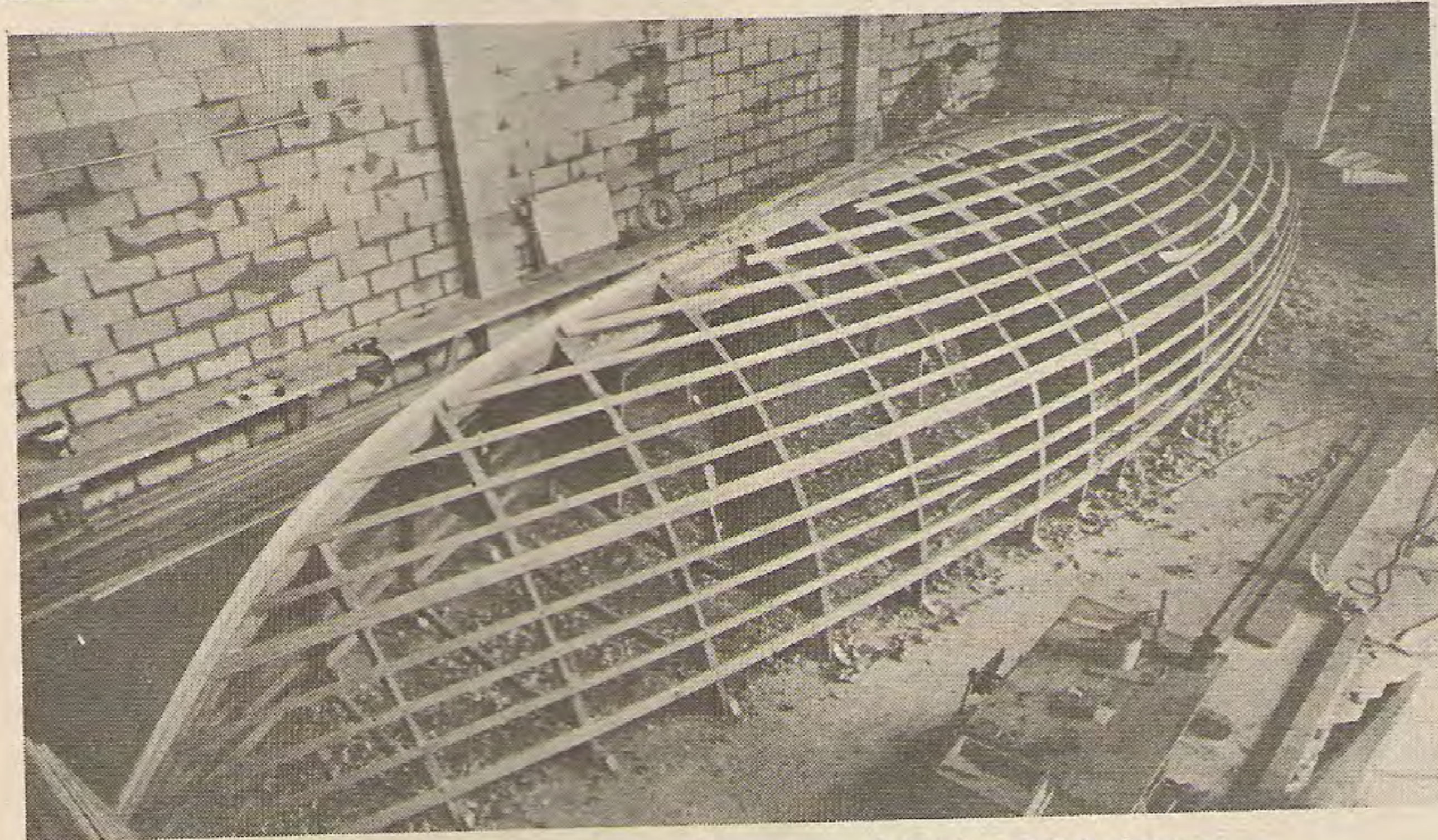
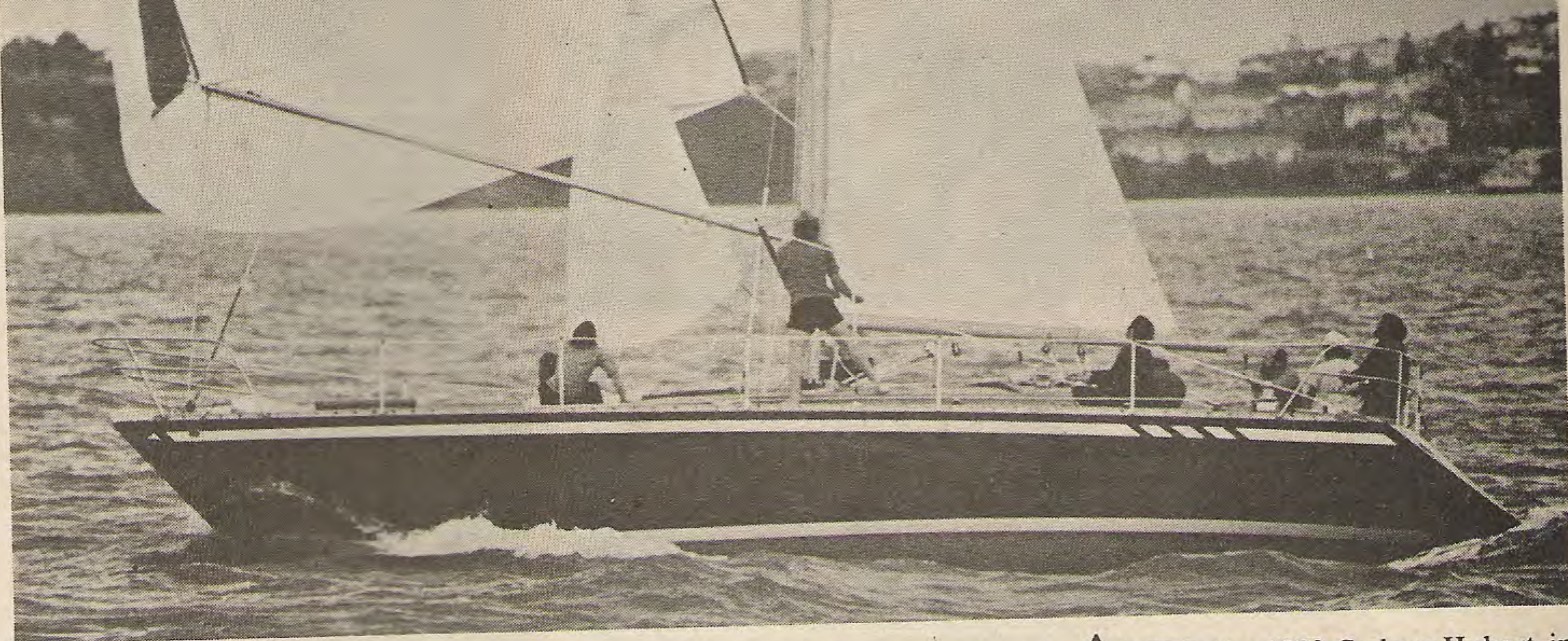
All water and exhaust outlets are through the transom. The large hole high on port side is tube housing for the man-overboard pole. Long tiller for helmsman who uses the front cockpit with the sheet men in the two aft cockpits with liferaft stowage between them (full of ropes in photo)



Peter Atkinson and Geoff Stagg natter in the four-berth for'ard cabin while Jazz Jaspers works on the echo-sounder on his chart table. In the centre is the sink bench and ice-box unit which sits over the fuel tank

WHISPERS OF WELLINGTON

Story and photographs by JOHN MALLITTE



Stage one . . . 1 3/4 in x 1 3/8 in stringers and 3 1/4 in x 1 3/8 in frames

The hull after turning



AFTER the 1972 Sydney-Hobart in which she crossed the line a creditable eighth and finished fourth in her division in a 90-boat fleet, the 45 ft *Whispers II* competed in the Hobart-Auckland race, spent three hours in Auckland at the finish, set sail for Wellington, sailed straight across the starting line for the Wellington-Nelson race six hours behind the rest of the fleet, and set a course record for the event.

This is just one example of the determination, skill and energy that Geoff Stagg and his crew put into yacht racing, and it earned him the backing of Wellington in building a new boat called *Whispers of Wellington* for a determined effort to make the first full New Zealand Admirals Cup team.

The new boat is a 40-footer, also designed by John Spencer, and built in Auckland. She is syndicate-owned: 35 Wellingtonians, only three or four of whom are yachtsmen and the rest "switched-on business men" (Stagg's description), own half the boat and Geoff Stagg owns the other half. The syndicate is well organised with a chairman and a board, and a regular newsletter is sent to all members.

The amount budgeted for was \$60 000 but so far they have needed only \$50 000, a more realistic price for a New Zealand racing yacht than some of the Auckland "gold-platers."

Stagg started serious boating with a Cherub called *Whispers*. He then built the 45 ft *Whispers II* in his backyard and launched her in 1970 when he was 23. He sailed her some 25 000 miles in offshore

Nav and sailing aids include a full range of Brookes and Gatehouse gear, a Windex at the masthead, a Marlin echosounder and Teleradio 80 RT set.

Whispers of Wellington was rigged by Alspar with one of their J2 section masts which is 8½ x 5½ in and 56 ft overall. It carries a double spreader rig with swaged 1 x 19 wire and a Headfoil on the forestay. The boom is an F-section with adjustable internal gear for the slab reef. The clew outhaul can be put on a pin stop on the boom track so that the outhaul tackle can be used on the flattening reef.

DESIGNER'S COMMENT

WHISPERS OF WELLINGTON was designed to provide Geoff Stagg with a boat capable of winning in Admirals Cup competition while retaining *Whispers II's* ability to be driven hard down-wind in strong winds and big seas — not a feature enjoyed by most modern ocean racing yachts, although clearly an advantage in a boat which will ultimately be racing out of Wellington.

Geoff's specific requirements (apart from money) were for a boat which would sail like *Whispers* but with 8 ft on the mast and 6 ft off the rating.

With trials for New Zealand's Admirals Cup team set for January and February in Auckland, it was clear that rating and sail area requirements as above would be essential to success as it is normal to expect a fair amount of light weather at this time of year. It therefore became a matter of balancing rated length (L) with displacement to achieve a low rating.

If the *Whispers II* characteristics were to be retained, displacement had to be kept in the light-to-moderate bracket, but the lighter the displacement, the smaller the measurements for immersed depth forward and amidships would be, increasing the rating unless either sail area or L was reduced.

The former was just not on so it had to be the latter.

The IOR does not really encourage beam aft and this is reflected in most IOR designs. It does, however, compensate a boat which is short aft for loss of sailing length beyond its static LWL and/or the actual end of the boat, permitting some saving in L without too greatly affecting performance, particularly in light conditions.

With a sail plan 8 ft lighter than *Whispers II*, 1 ft less WL length, 2 ft more beam and almost 1½ tons more displacement, something drastic was obviously necessary to enable the boat to be driven hard down-wind and tiller-steered without broaching.

I have long been of the opinion that broaching is caused in the main by two factors:

The deck collar plate round the mast also carries all halyards and other lines and the collar extends below the deck where a ½ in pin through it and the mast puts the load on to the mast rather than on to the deck.

A full outfit of Hoods sails is carried and winches are Wilkies.

Geoff Stagg was convinced after two races that the boat is good and that it is up to himself and the crew to sort it all out. If this 27-year-old veteran and his crew sail *Whispers of Wellington* as well as they sailed *Whispers II*, they'll sort out a lot of other people and boats too.

1 Inadequate and often inefficient skeg and rudder area.

2 Positioning of the keel too far forward on the hull.

Wetted area is a major factor in light weather performance which is not assessed by the IOR and considerable ratings can be affected by reduction of keel and rudder/skeg areas.

In the case of a keel this is usually limited by the amount of lead needed and results in the keel being positioned to suit the weight of the lead rather than its function as a keel (to provide lateral area).

Rudders and skegs are reduced to a minimum for "normal" conditions resulting in their stalling in hard conditions downwind.

Forward placing of the sail plan will provide these boats with a well-balanced helm to windward but down-wind on reaching the helm is heavy. When Syd Fischer won the One Ton Cup with Stormy Petrel, many reasons were put forward for his superiority over other Swan 37s but the one which was overlooked was the major difference — the very much larger rudder fitted by Fischer to his boat.

Complete steerability

So far as rudder/skeg area is concerned, I have always believed in making these adequate. It was important, however, to keep the keel area down to achieve light weather performance so I decided that we must obtain a hydraulic drive Ford engine so that we could install it forward and thus be enabled to move the keel as far aft as possible.

We were able to obtain and satisfactorily adapt a standard Penta hydraulic unit to the engine and thus move the keel 18 in farther aft, an appreciable distance on a 32 ft waterline, achieving an easy helm both upwind and down and complete steerability when pushed hard down-wind.

The forward placement of the engine

results in a disproportionate engine allowance in that the engine is considerably further from the centre of buoyancy than would be the case for the same allowance when positioned aft, but no ill-effects from this seem to have resulted so far. Pitching, for example, had to be considered a possibility in placing the engine weight forward.

One good result is the ease with which the crew are able to use the forward hatch with the engine housing immediately under it. We were also able to use the area under the cockpit to provide sea berths so that along with more or less normal quarter berths, these provide for complete offwatch sleeping requirements when racing in the best possible part of the boat, similar to the arrangement in *Ginko*.

The companionway and main hatch are central with the ladder hard up over the housing for the hydraulic engine, immediately forward of which is an "island" unit containing ice-box and sink with fuel tank under. Either side of the companionway is a "wet area" with teak seats for changing wet gear and wet (hanging) lockers are situated either side of the ladder under the bridge deck.

Galley and navigation departments are forward of this, the former to port and the latter to starboard, with access to the forward end of the cabin both sides of the island fitting.

The mast is stepped immediately in front of the latter and the mast step is a continuation of the ¼ in mild steel bottom of the fuel tank. All 1 in keel bolts come up through this plate to avoid the need for countersinking into the inner keelson.

Forward of the mast, a further four berths (two settees and two pilot berths) provide for the balance of the crew in port, while at sea this area will be used entirely for sails.

The forecabin contains only the engine, chemical toilet and anchor stowage. Only skin fitting in the hull is the water intake for engine and sink, the balance being through the transom with a pump to clear the sink into one of the cockpit drains.

On top the deck is semi-flush. I have never seen how flush decks can be easier to work on except in light weather. The low cabin trunk tapering off into the foredeck provides a foot-hold and adds considerably to the strength without much extra weight.

The cockpit arrangements aft, place the helmsman forward from the sheet winchers so that they do not obstruct him or his vision. Halyards etc are led to winches on the aft end of the cabin top. The weight of the sheet winchers aft is inboard of the aft end of LWL so that they do not upset trim as they might in a more conventional design.

The eight-man liferaft is stowed in the bridge between the two aft cockpits and the dan buoy in a tube through the transom.