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Cheoy Lee 32



*Combining character with space
and elegant comfort*

by Don Casey

WE FIRST SAW *ZEPHYR* IN SAPO-dilla Bay in the Turks and Caicos, noting her size more than her appearance. My wife, Olga, and I had been assured that almost no one was cruising to the Caribbean in small boats, yet among nine boats waiting there to sail to the Dominican Republic, four were less than 32 feet in length.

A week later, the weather window we were awaiting finally materialized, and we all made the overnight crossing together, nine masthead lights forming a constellation on a pitch-black ocean. Daybreak revealed the astonishing mountains of Hispaniola, barely

conceivable after the low islands of the Bahamas. Entering Lupéron Harbor that morning, we became forever linked as members of the “group of nine.”

We often spent time ashore in company with *Zephyr*'s owners, Bruce and Cheryl Horton, but, with nearly 100 cruising boats in the harbor, more than three months would pass before we went aboard *Zephyr*. When we did, we discovered something special.

In 1993, Bruce and Cheryl were living a “normal” life — a comfortable house with a mortgage, two cars in the driveway, and two jobs. But the house happened to be in Vero Beach, Florida,

a community where an inordinate number of sailors pause, soon to leave for (or recently returned from) far-flung destinations.

“I was working as an electrician,” Bruce recalls. “I got paired up with this guy, and he was always talking about sailing around in the Caribbean. He had just returned from there, and he had lots of stories.”

Entrancing tales

A friendship developed that soon expanded to include Cheryl. Bruce and Cheryl were entranced by the tales told by new friend George. More to the subject at hand, they were strongly attracted to the life George described.

Neither Bruce nor Cheryl were new to boating. Bruce had recently owned a 50-foot houseboat in Tennessee. Cheryl describes her boating experience as “mostly ornamenting powerboats in a bikini,” but she had done a lot of that and loved being on the water. The two of them began to talk about buying a sailboat. George encouraged them by inviting them aboard his boat — which was on the hard in a boatyard for most of the time they knew him. That didn't matter.

“George's boat was very traditional — lots of wood. I loved that,” Cheryl confesses. “It's probably why we ended up with a boat with so much wood.” Bruce recalls that the boat had no through-hull openings and that it was tiller-steered. These were manifestations of George's “strong and simple philosophy” about cruising sailboats. It wasn't a bad introduction.

Soon enough, the Hortons were scouring classified ads, looking for a sailboat to buy. “But we didn't know a sloop from a ketch, full keel from fin, or stiff from tender.” At first their search was hobbled by uncertainty. Then, as their knowledge of what they were actually looking for grew, they

Zephyr, Bruce and Cheryl Horton's Cheoy Lee 32, at anchor in Lupéron Harbor, above. From the moment Cheryl saw this boat, she knew it was the one. Zephyr had already traveled widely with two previous owners, but the Hortons have added to her sailing résumé. More exterior shots, on facing page.

saw the number of potentially suitable boats decline. Their search droned, sputtered, then ground to a complete halt. Even the idea of going cruising lost steam.

Drove by marina

Bruce and Cheryl turned their attention to real estate. "We had been out looking at a parcel of land and just happened to drive by the municipal marina," Bruce says, eyebrows raised in apparent lingering wonder at the unexpected ways life turns. Nodding at a shared memory, Cheryl continues the story: "We just decided to stop and take a walk on the docks."

It was a life-altering stroll. In one of the transient slips they discovered a small sloop with a wooden mast, teak decks, and loads of traditional character. Hanging from the lifeline was a diminutive "For Sale" sign. They paused, walked on, then came back. Fortunately for this story, the sloop's owners were aboard and accommodating. One look below and Cheryl was in love. And why not? This particular boat, of which only a small number were built, has a unique and singularly attractive interior.

Designed by Ray Richards and constructed in fiberglass in the Cheoy Lee yard in Hong Kong, the Cheoy Lee 32 is only one inch shy of being as long as the name suggests. It draws 4½ feet and weighs just over 11,000 pounds.

"One look below and Cheryl was in love. And why not?"

This particular boat, of which only a small number were built, has a unique and singularly attractive interior."

With a 27-foot waterline and a 10-foot-6-inch beam, the Cheoy Lee 32 has a generous amount of interior space. It is here that this boat most distinguishes itself.

The most prominent cabin feature is the centerline circular settee spreading across almost the full width of the saloon and providing comfortable seating for eight or more. A drop-leaf table converts this space to a dining area. This table can be lowered for guest sleeping. Forward of the settee is a large V-berth that can be screened from the main saloon with folding louvered shutters.

Enclosed head

Aft of the settee on the port side is a hanging locker and a convenient and attractive drawer cabinet. Aft of these saloon features is the enclosed head. On the starboard side is a U-shaped galley with a gimbaled propane stove. Aft of the galley is a stand-up navigation desk, with a quarter berth below. A second quarter berth is aft of the

head. Two overhead hatches and eight portlights keep the cabin fresh and make it bright.

A step on the engine access hatch and a small ladder above leads into a spacious cockpit with pedestal steering and wood coamings. In addition to the spruce mast and teak decks, the Cheoy Lee 32 was delivered with teak eyebrows, handrails, toerails, portlight frames, and deck-hatch bases. The carved nameboard on the transom was also teak.

Zephyr was the name carved on the board. The Hortons quickly became her new owners. "The necessary negotiations were really little more than a formality," Bruce says with a shrug. "*Zephyr* became Cheryl's boat the minute she stepped below."

Commissioned in San Diego in 1977, *Zephyr* had carried her first owners south along the Pacific coast of Central America, through the Panama Canal, and across the Caribbean Sea to the U.S. East Coast. Her second owners took *Zephyr* back to the Caribbean, as far south as Grenada, before returning to Florida. Bruce and Cheryl became the third owners.

They kept the name: "We had made the mistake of renaming another boat and had nothing but bad luck with it. We weren't taking any chances." This nod to superstition augured well for grasping the nuances of becoming sailors.



Building a kitty

The Hortons sold their home and moved aboard *Zephyr*. They spent the next three years living aboard in a Fort Pierce marina, building a cruising kitty, and learning to sail. There they also removed the teak deck, divining early the potentially destructive nature of this feature of their new boat. This deck project included moving *Zephyr's* anchors to the bow and removing an anchor well that intruded into the V-berth. Aft they installed stainless davits for carrying a dinghy.

Another early modification was the installation of 12-volt refrigeration. Surmising that he would need to add insulation, Bruce cut an opening into the space behind the back of the circular settee to gain access to the box. This led to seven more back-panel openings, creating eight much-appreciated new storage compartments. One of these compartments houses a small watermaker.

"In the marina we met lots of other sailors preparing their boats for cruising. But few actually went," Cheryl relates. There is pride in both her voice and posture when she con-

The Cheoy Lee 32 has two variations on the accommodation plan. *Zephyr's* layout has the A plan with a distinctive circular settee. The B plan has a more traditional settee and folding table. Otherwise, the two plans are similar with the galley to starboard and the nav station aft.

"The most prominent cabin feature is the centerline circular settee spreading across almost the full width of the saloon and providing comfortable seating for eight or more. A drop-leaf table converts this space to a dining area. This table can be lowered for guest sleeping."



tinues, "We went."

Indeed they did. In 1997 they stowed docklines aboard and set off across the Gulf Stream for the Bahamas. Their first cruise would last seven months, taking them nearly the full length of the Bahamas chain and expanding their sailing knowledge exponentially. It ended at Rum Cay, where they had a friend rebuilding a hurricane-damaged home. An offer to help had spurred them to sail south and east of Georgetown, Exuma — the usual terminus for a first Bahamas cruise.

Found employment

At the end of their first cruise they did not return to the United States. Rather, they both found employment with the Atlantic Undersea Test and Evaluation Center (AUTEC) on Andros Island. At AUTEC, the Hortons had both the time and the facilities to make labor-intensive improvements. Among them was stripping and barrier-coating *Zephyr's* bottom. With access to the center's machine shop, Bruce turned and shaped a taller foot-pump spout, "the best galley improvement for me," Cheryl says. Indeed, one does wonder if spout manufacturers ever actually tried to wash a pot under the standard offerings.

After two years, they had also accumulated a list of maintenance and improvement projects that they could not easily accomplish in Andros due to the limited availability of parts, so they headed back



to Florida. By the time they arrived, a new project had been added to the top of their list—replacing *Zephyr's* chainplates. “On the trip back we broke one due to corrosion we couldn’t see. The chainplates were all hidden behind cabinetry,” Bruce says. “So in addition to replacing all the chainplates, we made modifications below that left them visible to regular inspection.” *Zephyr* remained in Florida for six months while Bruce and Cheryl re-rigged her, replaced the tired Volvo MD-11C with a new 3GM Yanmar, and renewed the exterior canvas.

Canvas work merits more than a toss-off mention. It is an ongoing art form aboard *Zephyr*, with wholesale and subtle changes occurring on a regular basis. Bruce does the design. Cheryl does the sewing. Cheryl has also done all the interior upholstery on the Sailrite sewing machine that is an essential part of *Zephyr's* cruising equipment.

What changes?

After two additional years working and cruising in the Bahamas, the Hortons finally pointed *Zephyr's* bow toward the Caribbean. Eighteen months later they were in Grenada, where Olga and I reconnected with them. There I asked them both what, after 10 years of being aboard, they would change.


“Ray Richards’ original design has been nearly perfect for us,” Cheryl says. “We have not altered it at all.

Bruce and Cheryl at home in their cockpit, at right, and under sail, middle right. The *Zephyr* shows off her carved teak nameboard, below right. Note how Bruce created stowage spaces behind all seatbacks, below left.

All of our improvements have been in equipment and appointments.”

“I think I would like a cutter rig,” Bruce ventures, then falls silent. A one-item wish list says all there is to say about how well matched this boat is to her owners. But time takes its toll on us all. “We plan to cruise for two more years,” says Cheryl, “probably completing the Caribbean circuit. When we are finished with cruising, whenever that is, *Zephyr* will be for sale.” When that happens, someone will have the opportunity to acquire a very nice boat.

“Our powerboats were always just toys . . . possessions,” Cheryl tells me as I am leaving. “Sailboats are different. I really believe that sailboats have a soul. *Zephyr's* soul is protective. This is a boat that takes care of all who sail aboard her.”

I had cause to reflect on this parting remark two weeks later as Hurricane Ivan was devastating Grenada. Just days before, *Zephyr* had safely carried Bruce and Cheryl out of harm’s way to Venezuela’s Isla de Margarita. 



Cheoy Lee 32

A designer compares four sturdy, solidly performing cruising yachts

by Ted Brewer

THE FOUR YACHTS UNDER DISCUSSION HERE COVER A 14-YEAR design period, from the 1970 Endeavour to the 1984 Crealock. Although two of the boats — the Valiant and the Crealock — are double-enders, they are all remarkably similar in many ways. The Endeavour is the most extreme, perhaps, having the shortest waterline and shoalest draft by a few inches and the smallest sail area of the group. Designed by Ted Irwin as a cruiser/racer, its Floridian heritage explains the shoal draft. Because it was designed at the end of the Cruising Club of America (CCA) era, its low rig and moderate sail area are understandable. Regardless, it fits in nicely with this company as a comfortable family cruiser with offshore aspirations.

Here are the numbers. We had a bit of trouble obtaining some of the figures, and I'm still not 100 percent sure of the dates, so readers might correct me if I'm wrong on any of the facts.

To my mind, Ray Richards' handsome Cheoy Lee 32 has one advantage over the rest of the pack and that is its optional ketch rig. This increases sail area to 540 square feet and the SA/Displ. ratio to 17.2. The drag of the mizzenmast could reduce windward performance slightly, perhaps, but the added sail area should improve off-wind performance, particularly when the mizzen staysail is set.

And, as you know, gentlemen never sail to windward! As well, the ketch rig offers a wide variety of reduced sail combinations for heavy-weather conditions and can be easily trimmed for hands-off sailing to weather.


In any case, I've long been enamored of ketches and yawls. I expect that comes from my teenage years when I read, and dreamed about, William A.

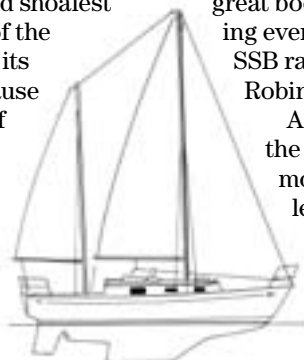
Robinson's *Ten Thousand Leagues Over the Sea*, the story of his circumnavigation aboard the *Svaap*, a 32-foot Phil Rhodes ketch, in the late 1920s and early '30s. It is still a great book and, if you can find a copy, well worth reading even in these days of GPS, radar, depth sounders, SSB radio, and the other modern conveniences that Robinson managed without so successfully.

As to performance, I think we have to consider the Endeavour to be the "tail-end Charlie" under most conditions. I expect it'll make a bit more leeway than the others, due to its lesser draft, and prove to be a tad slower in light air, under 10 knots or so, due to its smaller rig. However, the Endeavour could well be the heavy-weather champion of the group thanks to its high ballast ratio, high comfort ratio, and moderate rig. The other three are more evenly

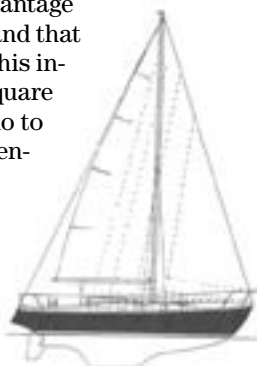
matched for performance; I would not want to be the one to handicap them for a race around a triangular course.

In any case, racing performance is not what these boats are about. Rather, they are four sturdy, solidly performing cruising yachts. A study of the numbers indicates that they

are all quite capable of comfortable coastal cruising and offshore island-hopping. Indeed, lesser yachts make happy and successful ocean voyages every year, and there is no reason these boats could not do the same, given good condition, proper equipment, an experienced crew, and the usual run of luck. 



Cheoy Lee 32



Endeavour 32



Valiant 32



Crealock 34

	Cheoy Lee 32	Endeavour 32	Valiant 32	Crealock 34
Years built	1978-86	1970-82	1977-	1984-
LOA	31' 11"	32' 7"	32' 1"	34' 1"
LWL	27' 0"	25' 6"	26' 0"	26' 2"
Beam	10' 6"	10' 0"	10' 5"	10' 0"
Draft	4' 6"	4' 2"	4' 6"	4' 11"
Displacement	11,300 lb	11,700 lb	11,800 lb	12,000 lb
Ballast	4,200 lb	5,000 lb	4,700 lb	4,700 lb
LOA/LWL ratio	1.18	1.28	1.23	1.30
Beam/LWL ratio	0.389	0.392	0.401	0.382
Displ./LWL ratio	256.3	315.0	299.7	299.4
Bal./Displ. ratio	.372	.427	.398	.392
Sail area	540 sq ft	470 sq ft	524 sq ft	534 sq ft
SA/Displ. ratio	17.2	14.6	16.2	16.3
Capsize number	1.87	1.76	1.83	1.75
Comfort ratio	26.6	30.3	28.7	30.1