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#1 ([permalink](#))[John Kretschmer](#) 

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The Classic Valiant 40

OK, dear readers, I hope you didn't stop by Sailnet looking for fun, or even some modest enlightenment about how to do something on or with your boat. Nope, today it's time to test your sailboat IQ. We are going back in history a bit, but not too far, about 30 years ago, to the birth of an American classic. Ready or not, here we go.

What boat launched the storied career of naval architect Bob Perry? What boat is usually considered the first performance cruiser? What boat did Mark Schrader sail on his 1983 epic circumnavigation south of the five great capes? What boat was named "cruiser of the decade," by *Sail Magazine* in 1980 and inducted into the Sailboat Hall of Fame in 1997? What boat did Francis Stokes sail in the 1976 and 1980 OSTARS? What boat epitomized the dreaded "pox," that came to haunt the fiberglass boatbuilding industry in the late '70s and early '80s? What boat—and this one needs an asterisk—has been in continuous production longer than other? What boat is built today on an inland lake, a long way from the ocean? What boat represents one of the best buys on the used boat market for blue water cruising? By now you've either quit reading and clicked over to something more interesting or likely figured out that this is a trick quiz and there is only one answer. If your answer is the legendary Valiant 40, you're right and that means you really know your boats. Or, like me, you're just getting older.



This boat made its debut on the sailing scene in the mid '70s and subsequently altered the attitudes of performance cruisers everywhere. Can you identify it?

The first Valiant 40, hull number 101, rolled off the [line](#) at the Uniflite factory near Seattle in 1974. Two hundred Valiant 40s were built before the new Valiant 42 was launched in 1992. The 42 is essentially the same hull as the original 40 (with a small bowsprit and other upgrades), which is the reason why the Valiant 40/42 is still considered, 'in production' and requires an asterisk. In 1984, Rich Worstell, a Valiant dealer who developed a thriving business despite an unlikely location on the shores of Lake Texoma, acquired the Valiant tooling and moved the company to its present home in land-locked central Texas. More than 50 new 42s have been completed at Valiant's plant in Gordonville near the Oklahoma border. Depending on your budget, either an old Valiant 40 or new 42 should be on your short list if you're looking for a serious blue water cruiser.

"The Valiant 40 has been everywhere and done just about everything," says designer Bob Perry, "what else can you say? Of course the boat was an unlikely success story." Unlikely indeed, the origin of the Valiant 40 gives hope to all young sailors and aspiring designers who scribble on cocktail napkins and dream of building the ultimate boat and actually making money too.



Perry, Nathan Rothman, and Stan and Sylvia Dabney were friends living in Seattle in the early '70s. Perry, who was actually living aboard the Dabney's Islander 36, was fresh from college and desperate to design boats. Rothman, who had been building ferro-cement boats with designer, author and Pacific Northwest cruising guru, Jay Benford, was anxious to build in fiberglass. The Dabneys had tasted the cruising life and were seriously infected with dancing visions of tropical islands, a condition heightened by the perpetual gray hue hovering over Seattle, they wanted a blue water boat to cruise the world. What emerged from this friendship was the Valiant 40.

According to Stan and Sylvia Dabney, a picture of the yacht, Holger Danske, a lovely Swedish double ender designed by Aage Nielson, inspired Perry's design of the Valiant 40's stern. Perry readily admits that a canoe stern was incorporated into the boat more for its looks than seakeeping characteristics and as a blatant attempt to tap into the success of the Westsail 32. "The Westsail changed the world," Perry says, "cruising hit the mainstream when a picture of a 32 was on the cover of Time Magazine. Everybody wanted to go cruising, and the only way to do it was in a double-ender like the Westsail. Unfortunately, the Westsail 32 didn't sail very well."

The Valiant 40's rear end had better hydrodynamics than the Westsail and Perry's version of the double-ended tumble home stern influenced the shape of cruising boat design for years. From the waterline up however, there is little evidence that the Valiant 40 is anything but another heavy, full-keeled blue water cruiser. There is a decent sweep to the sheer [line](#), the bow is proud and the overhangs are moderate. The cabin trunk stretches well forward and is a bit boxy looking. The [rig](#) and deck hardware are robust. The cockpit is small and somewhat uncomfortable. However, the molded bulwark that makes working the foredeck in a blow less terrifying is one of my favorite features.

Below the waterline, Perry created a hull shape that while not radical, was dangerously modern for a cruising boat in the early '70s, after all, the displacement/length ratio was a skimpy 250. A cutaway forefoot and aft section reduce the wetted surface area. A large powerful fin keel provides plenty of directional stability yet allows for a degree of nimbleness that was then uncommon in a cruising boat. The protected rudder is mounted on a full skeg. On paper at least, Perry had made a breakthrough. The Valiant 40 would clearly outperform her full-keeled cruising cousins, but safety, comfort and accommodations were not compromised.

Building the boat proved more challenging than designing it, especially during the oil embargo of 1973. Rothman wanted to build the hulls himself, but he couldn't find or afford the resin. Finally, he contracted with Uniflight, a successful powerboat builder that had built sailboats in the past. The Dabney's became the marketing arm of the operation. The original name of the company was intended to be Voyager Yachts, and a fancy VY logo with a star in the middle was commissioned. Unfortunately, that name was already taken, so a new name with a VY was needed, hence Valiant Yachts. The star survived the name change. The boat struck a cord with the sailing public and by the time hull number one was finally completed, the fledgling firm had orders for eight more.

The boat was soon tested in the real, watery world and the results were astounding. Between 1975 and 1979 Bill and Mary Black sailed hull number 107 around the world and were awarded the coveted Blue Water Medal



One advantage the Valiant 40 enjoyed over its predecessors was a hydrodynamically superior transom, which influenced cruising designs for years to come. Here the same transom was used for the Valiant 50.

by the Cruising Club of America. While the Valiant 40 is well proven as a cruising boat, with numerous circumnavigations to its credit, its record in short-handed distance races has cemented its reputation as an ocean going thoroughbred. In 1976 Francis Stokes' Moonshine acquitted herself well in the OSTAR, being the first monohull to finish the single-handed race from Plymouth England to Newport, RI. Stokes sailed Moonshine in the 1980 race as well and also won both legs of the Bermuda One-Two races in 1978. Dan Byrne, an inexperienced sailor, sailed hull number 101 in the inaugural 1982-83 B.O.C. Around the World Race. Mark Schrader's 1983 non-stop circumnavigation in Resourceful was the fastest ever at the time. More recently, Valiant 40s and 42s have faired well in events ranging from the Atlantic Rally for Cruisers to the Caribbean 1500 where it has won its class several times.

But the original Valiant 40 does have its warts, or I should say, its blisters. According to Stan Dabney, who has owned hull number 108, Native Sun for 28 years, the well-known account of Valiants blistering because Uniflite switched to fire retardant resin, is only part of the story. Dabney claims that the blisters occurred when Uniflite switched to an inferior resin. "Like other builders, Uniflite was already using a fire retardant resin, but during the energy crunch in the mid '70s, some resin wasn't up to snuff." Dan Spurr, the former Editor of Practical Sailor, wrote in his book, *Heart Of Glass*, that the questionable resin had a trade name of Hetron.

The results of boats molded with this flawed resin were not pretty. While some Valiant 40s were horribly scarred with deep, structural fiberglass blisters up to 10 inches in diameter and requiring relamination, others experienced cosmetic blemishes restricted to the gelcoat layer. Still, you should be aware that boats built between 1976 and 1981, or hull numbers 120 to 249 all had some degree of osmotic blisters. As a result, a 1975 used Valiant 40 is often more valuable than a 1980 model. Worstell solved the problem for good in 1984 by switching to an isophthalic resin.

So does this mean you should avoid Valiant 40s built during this period? Absolutely not. Although most marine surveyors claim that only way to permanently fix a badly blistered boat is to completely peel the hull and re-fiberglass it, in most cases the blisters are simply unsightly. Blistered Valiant 40s are in some ways, one of the best values on the used boat market. And besides, by now many of older 40s have been properly repaired at some point.

Dabney, who today owns Offshore Atlantic Yachts in Riviera Beach, FL, notes the market is very healthy for used Valiant 40s. "We sell eight to 10 Valiant 40s a year, blister and non blister boats. They're a proven world cruiser that can be bought for a third the price of a new boat. If you have \$100,000 to spend and want to sail around the world in a fast, safe, seakindly boat, an old Valiant 40 is hard to beat."

"The boat struck a cord with the sailing public and by the time hull number one was finally completed, the fledgling firm had orders for eight more."



For a run of over 100 hulls, the Valiant 40's builders used inferior resin, leading to the need for substantial aftermarket repairs on those boats. Here one victim of those circumstances sits in the builder's yard near Lake Texoma after having had its gelcoat stripped.

Touching Base

OK, so Mr. Kretschmer has once again piqued your interest and you want to find further information about the classic Valiant 40. You're in luck because SailNet hosts two great resources for that purpose. Start by checking out the new website that evolved from the [Valiant Owners E-Mail Discussion List](#), the [Valiant Owners Group](#). Of course you can always post a query on the E-Mail Discussion List and use that means to get in touch with some of the more active Valiant 40 owners. What's not to like?

Suggested Reading:

[Cockpit Confessions](#) by John Kretschmer

[Gigi—One Boat's Story](#) by John Kretschmer

[The Venerable Bermuda 40](#) by John Kretschmer

SailNet Store Section: [Lifelines Accessories and Hardware](#)



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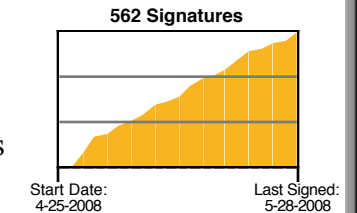
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