



NORDIC TUG 47



New naval architect, New design for NORDIC TUGS

By Michael Hauenstein

STAFF WRITER

When Lynn Senour died three years ago, Nordic Tugs not only lost its visionary naval architect; it lost the man responsible for the only hull the Burlington, Wash., boatbuilder had ever known. The highly regarded semidisplacement hull design — a quintessential “fast trawler” (top end roughly 18 mph) — had been a staple of these boats since their debut nearly three decades ago.

Nordic Tugs were introduced at the 1980 Seattle Boat Show, where the fledgling company took an eye-opening 58 orders for its sole design, the Nordic Tug 26. Over the years, Senour’s design was adapted to an expanding fleet that currently ranges from 32 to 52 feet.

“We’ve been building basically the same boat for 27 years now,” says Bob Shamek, sales manager for Nordic Tugs. “This type of change is not taken lightly at all, and it took us several months just to pick a new naval architect.”

After going two years without a naval architect following Senour’s death, Nordic Tugs began an intensive interview process that led to the hiring of Howard Apollonio, a professional engineer and naval architect from Bellingham. With Apollonio on board, the company is building tooling for a new model, the Nordic Tug 47, a single-engine model that sports a slightly different hull design from its forebears.

“The concept is comparable performance — maybe better — and a bigger boat with a shallower

draft,” says Shamek. “And to get some tweaks done on the hull.”

Apollonio, who started “seriously” building boats at age 15, says it is a balancing act to shepherd a new design into a highly regarded existing line of boats. “There are two basic elements to a new design,” says Apollonio, who is 64. “One is that you maintain the character of the existing lines of boats ... and the other is to modernize the boat in ways that don’t clash with the character of the boat.”

The Nordic Tug 47 will retain the personality and purpose of previous models, but with a hull that profits from advancements in design and technology. “It’s a split-chine design, something that’s evolved over time in the Northwest,” says Apollonio. The chine is altered where it meets the waterline, which among other things eliminates chine slap while at anchor. The design has been tested and proven to be more efficient up to near-planing speeds, according to Apollonio, with a dry ride and good seakeeping, particularly in a head sea.

Nordic Tugs has always stressed keeping the weight down to make boats run efficiently, and that trend continues with the 47. “The structural design is optimized so the boats are exceptionally strong ... but also lighter than they were in the past, so more efficient,” says Apollonio. “We’re doing what we call ‘rational weight control.’”

Apollonio and his crew also focused on the machinery arrangements. “It’s very refreshing for us to work with a single screw, because you get to do things you don’t usually get to do with an overpowered motoryacht or sportfisherman,” he says.

Apollonio, who worked at boatyards in his youth and became a full-time professional naval architect in 1969, has an extensive background in designing motoryachts. That experience is evident in the NT47’s spacious interior and flybridge. “You get a look and feel that’s that of a much larger boat,” Apollonio says of the interior layout, which incorporates design work by Judy Bell of Bell Design Group. “Ergonomics is one of our strong suits, and we’ve had some pretty successful interiors.”

The optional flybridge also is redesigned, a change of pace from existing Nordic Tugs. “It’s a slightly different style, and the seating is much different — all molded — and lots of space,” he says.

When compared to older Nordic Tugs, the exterior will show a slightly more rounded or sculptured look — “If you really pay attention,” notes Apollonio — but that look doesn’t stray far from the line’s distinctive appearance. “They have this particular, very authentic tug look to them — as much as you can in a yacht — and I think that’s very important,” he says. “The point is to retain the best parts of that look and simply refine and tweak it a little bit.”

The team at Apollonio Naval Architecture, working with the in-house design team at Nordic Tugs, eventually will touch the builder’s entire family of models. “This is a long-term relationship, and it involves all the boats in their line,” says Apollonio, who with his team of designers and engineers already has reworked the Nordic Tugs 32’s running characteristics.

As for the 47, the two-cabin boat has a full-beam master stateroom amidships — beneath the pilot-house — and a guest stateroom forward. It’s expected to launch next summer, with a base price of \$950,000. “The project’s coming right along, and we hope to have the first boat in the water next June [at Trawler Fest in Poulsbo, Wash.],” says Shamek.

Nordic Tugs also is constructing a new facility in which to build the 47. The company currently builds between 45 and 60 boats per year but could build as many as 90, depending on the mix of sizes, with the new facility. For more information, contact Nordic Tugs at (360) 757-8847 or visit www.nordictugs.com. ■

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