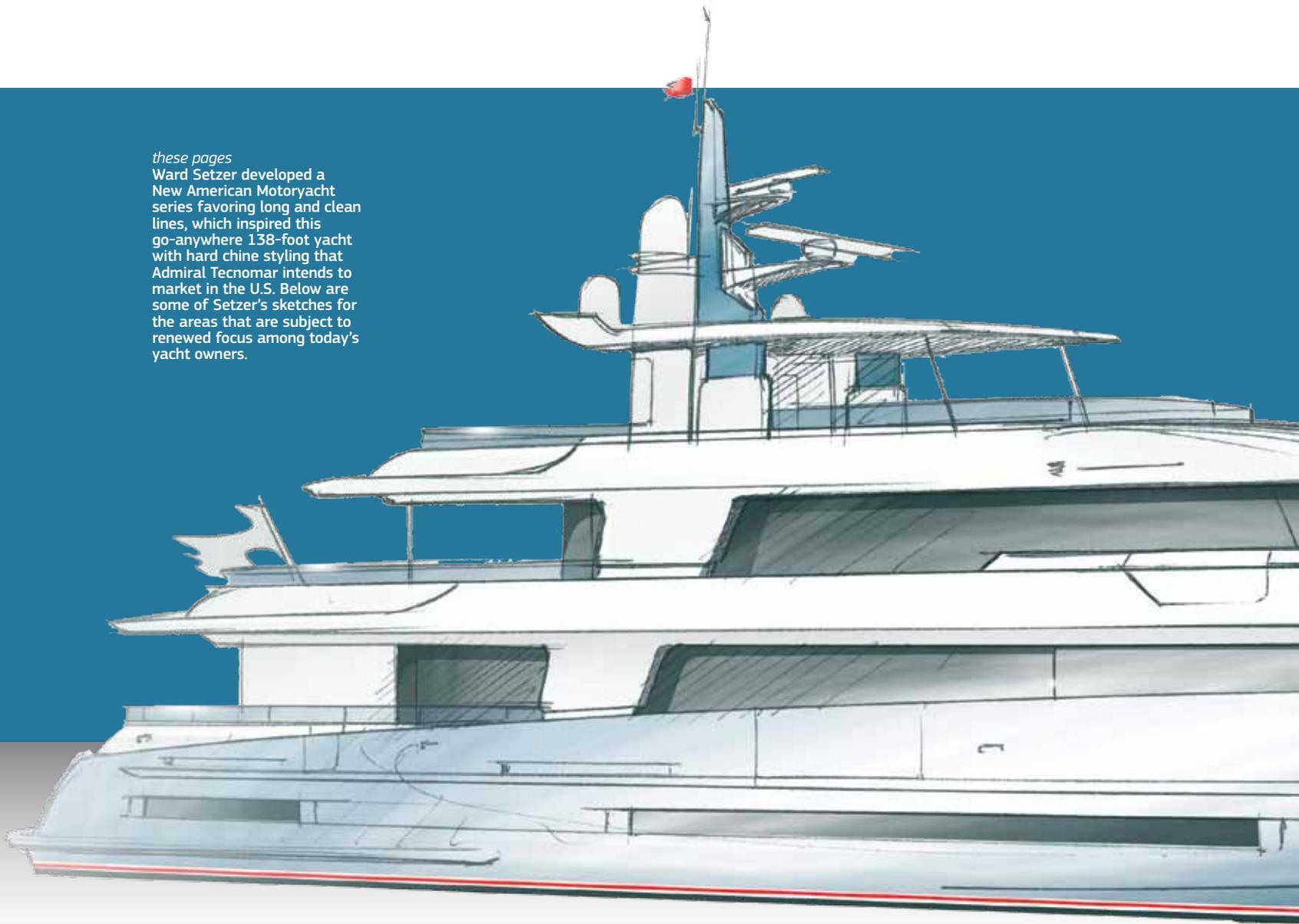


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Ward Setzer developed a New American Motoryacht series favoring long and clean lines, which inspired this go-anywhere 138-foot yacht with hard chine styling that Admiral Tecnomar intends to market in the U.S. Below are some of Setzer's sketches for the areas that are subject to renewed focus among today's yacht owners.



**INCREASED OWNER INVOLVEMENT IN OPERATION**



**TENDER STORAGE FORWARD FOR MORE ROOM AFT**

# WHAT AMERICANS WANT

Can American yacht design be defined?

TEXT BY DIANE M. BYRNE



A TRANSOM OPENING TO THE ENVIRONMENT

**IN THE MID-1970s, CHEVROLET** ran a television commercial that is among the most famous in the annals of Madison Avenue advertising. It featured a jingle that many of you no doubt remember, too: "Baseball, hot dogs, apple pie and Chevrolet." The idea was that Chevrolet cars, from their looks to their performance, were as all-American and consistent as our national pastime and some of our most distinctive foods.

Despite increased competition, especially from foreign brands, if you compare snapshots of the nation's highways from back then through today, you'll see that cars like the Camaro and the Corvette still rule the roads. Why? It's simple—they are, and always will be, American classics. Sure, their lines have been modernized over the decades, but they maintain longstanding design cues that turn your head—and keep you looking well after their roaring engines have left you standing in their dust.

Trends in the yachting industry often follow those of the automobile industry, which begs a few questions. Given how yacht buyers often assemble international teams to bring a yacht to life, is there such a thing as distinctly American yacht design these days? Related to this, is there any commonality among the features that American buyers want in comparison to our counterparts in Europe and elsewhere?

Ward Setzer, principal of Setzer Yacht Architects, believes there's a distinctly American style to yachts, just as there is to architecture, fashion and, yes, auto design. "I do believe now, after my sabbatical and studies, there's a line between American and more worldly styles," he says. In the summer of 2013 Setzer traded the views from his North Carolina studio for those of Antigua's English Harbour. While there, he was inspired to begin sketching designs based on yachts he saw dotting the local waters. Time and time again, he noted elements that came from longstanding American yacht design, even American commercial vessel design. He began thinking that the new wave of yacht buyers might be attracted to those time-honored looks if they were freshened up and had their boundaries pushed

a bit, while avoiding what he calls "visual pollution," meaning design elements that serve no purpose. By early this year, Setzer had turned

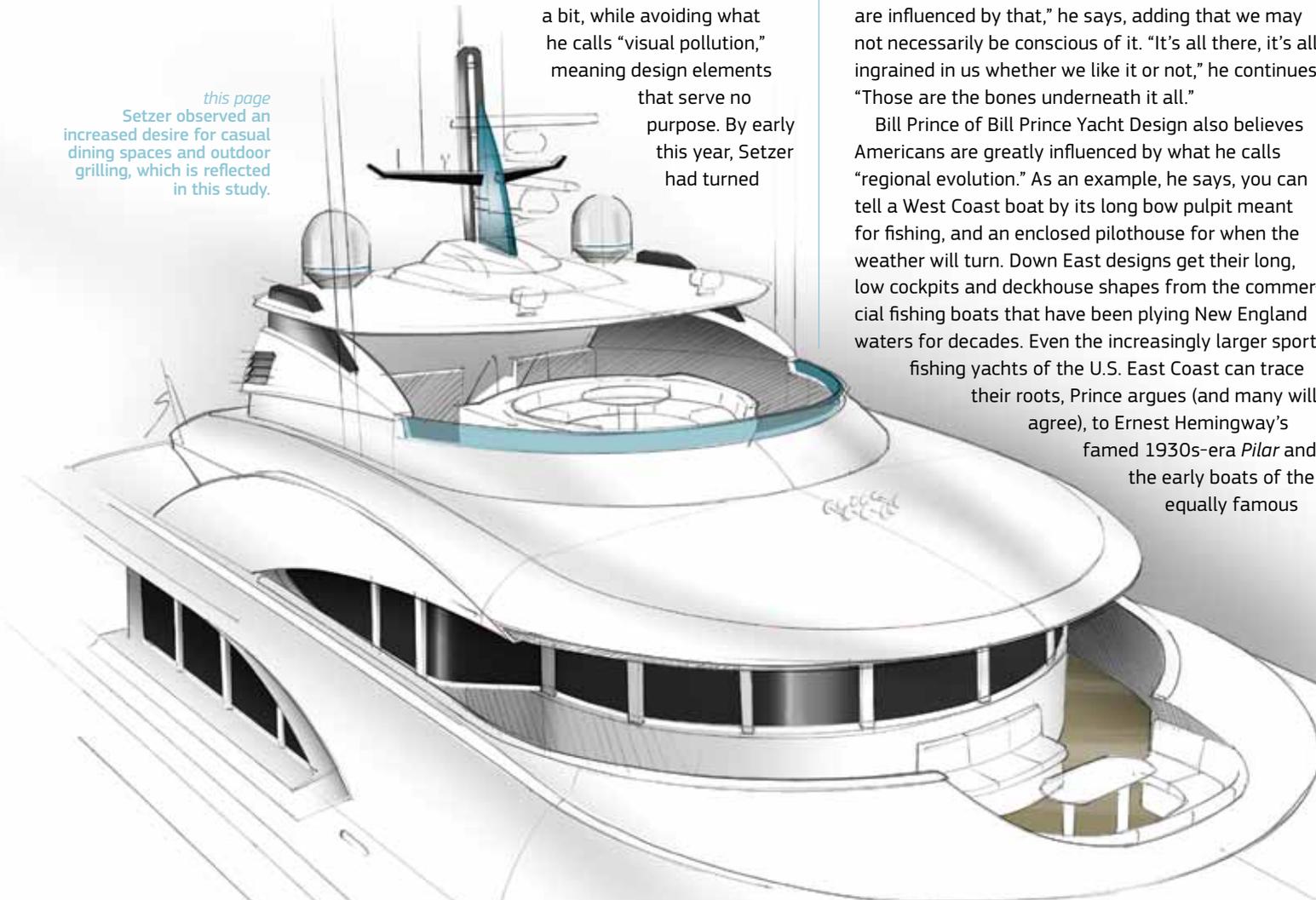
those initial sketches into nearly two dozen fleshed-out designs in a variety of LOAs, grouped under the banner New American Motoryachts. The designs include a Vintage Tri-Deck, Modern Commuter, Flushdeck RPH and Modern Explorer.

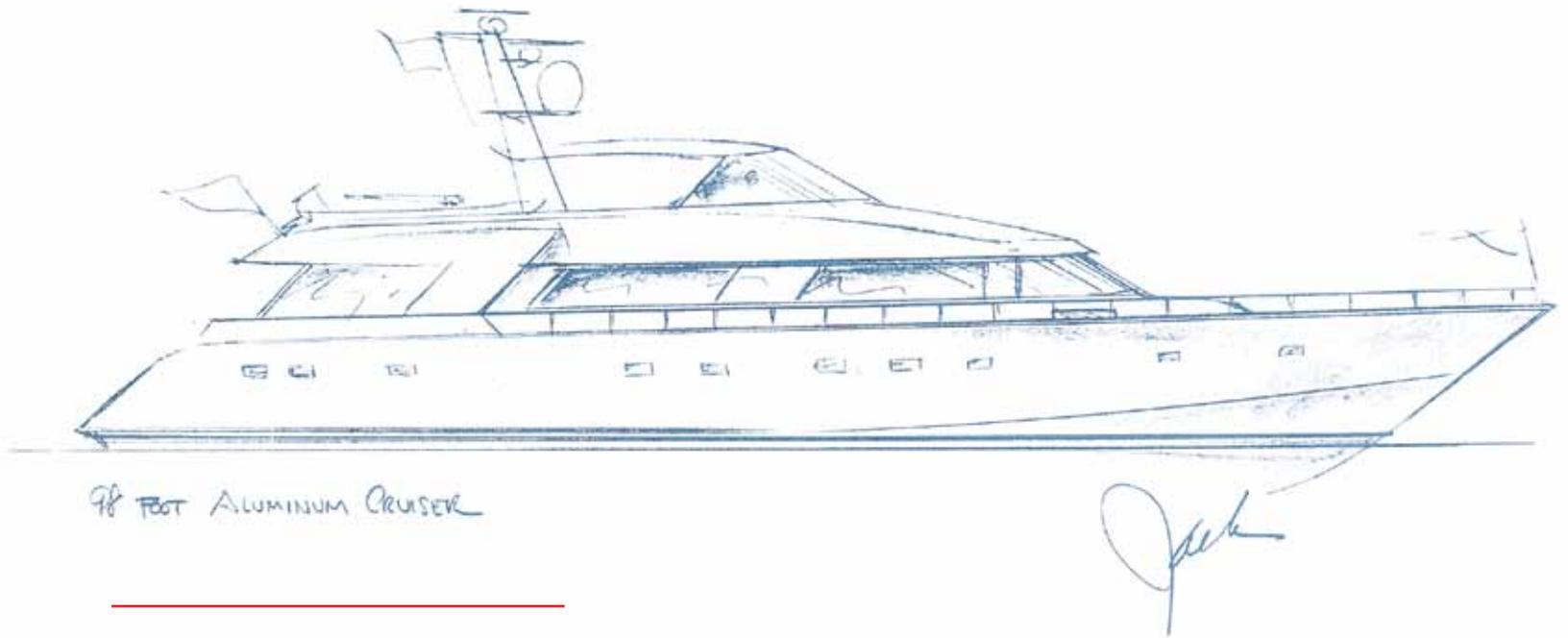
Setzer's New American Motoryacht series has caught the attention of shipyards on both sides of the Atlantic. In February of this year, Maine-based Front Street Shipyard announced it would offer clients a few hand-picked versions of the designs (See *ShowBoats International* April 2013). Now, Setzer and Italy-based Admiral Tecnomar reveal they are collaborating on a series of 40-, 50- and 60-meter yachts based on the New American Motoryacht designs, too. Setzer says they combine American style and Italian craftsmanship and "American ergonomics" (spacious hallways and larger furnishings) with European-driven ideals like a transom beach club.

So why do we want yachts that look like an Alaskan fishing vessel, or a classic rum runner, or a fantail cruiser from Henry Morgan's day or even a Maine lobster boat? Setzer thinks the explanation is pretty plain: It's what we see in our home region. "You and I are influenced by that," he says, adding that we may not necessarily be conscious of it. "It's all there, it's all ingrained in us whether we like it or not," he continues. "Those are the bones underneath it all."

Bill Prince of Bill Prince Yacht Design also believes Americans are greatly influenced by what he calls "regional evolution." As an example, he says, you can tell a West Coast boat by its long bow pulpit meant for fishing, and an enclosed pilothouse for when the weather will turn. Down East designs get their long, low cockpits and deckhouse shapes from the commercial fishing boats that have been plying New England waters for decades. Even the increasingly larger sport-fishing yachts of the U.S. East Coast can trace their roots, Prince argues (and many will agree), to Ernest Hemingway's famed 1930s-era *Pilar* and the early boats of the equally famous

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Setzer observed an increased desire for casual dining spaces and outdoor grilling, which is reflected in this study.





American owners tend to pay more attention to the nitty-gritty details. It's the **roll-up-your-sleeves-and-get-it-done-yourself** attitude."

Rybovich boatyard. "They've all developed what have become iconic American styles by virtue of the function," Prince says.

They've also all developed instant recognition the world over, and interestingly enough, fans abroad, too. Prince has a longtime client from Kuwait who wanted "a very American muscle boat," with the characteristic big, rumbling engines and 80-mph speeds. "This is a guy who said, 'I want the noise and the look and the muscle of an American offshore boat but the interior of a Riva,'" Prince says. "There are elements of the American boating lifestyle that appeal to a certain international audience."

Prince further believes Americans are largely influenced by the body of work from the late Jack Hargrave during the 1960s and beyond. "In his day, he was referred to as the dean of American yacht design," Prince says. "Whether it was a Hatteras or a Burger or a Feadship, there was an unmistakable look to the Jack Hargrave office." He describes it as "an honest look, a well-proportioned look, whether it was a tri-deck or a raised pilothouse." Indeed, some of those same yachts, even from the 1970s, "have withstood the test of time," Prince adds. "Refit after refit, they can be expected to serve their owners well for generations."

There's another style, though not from one particular naval architect, that Prince sees taking precedence particularly in the superyacht sector. "What we are seeing is the upward migration of the

American sport yacht," he says. "What started out as a 36-foot Sea Ray or 46-foot Sea Ray from 1987 has become a 140-foot express yacht, whether built in the States or elsewhere."

The sleek profiles associated with express yachts, as well as more trendy looks and even more conservative overall lines, are all elements that the Delta Design Group, part of Delta Marine, sees coming into play these days. Jay Miner, the group's chief naval architect, and Mark Obernberger, who is largely involved in the Group's interior-design work, attribute it to the auto industry's influence. "It often depends on the owners' likes and dislikes about their cars," Obernberger says. "They'll reference a car type or a car detail, and that extends into the overall design when you're talking about the yacht exteriors."

With outside decks, and especially interior spaces, Miner says American buyers consistently want a more informal approach. "The way the boats are laid out,



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Bill Prince, who has designed a modern version of the classic mahogany commuter *Posh* (left) for Mahogany Bay, says the work of the late Jack Hargrave is still influencing American yacht design. Hargrave sketched a 98-foot aluminum cruiser for one of his clients in 1988 (above).



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The Burger Boat Company, which collaborated with Jack Hargrave for years, hired Gregory C. Marshall Naval Architects to create a new family of yachts that gently brings the brand into the future; pictured here is the new Burger 121 with a modern twist on a still classic styling. Below is an all-American “muscle” boat that Bill Prince designed for a client in the Middle East.

they tend to be more inclusive and less partitioned off than a European-style yacht would be,” he explains. “Americans by nature are more outgoing; they’re more receptive to crossing paths with the crewmembers and interacting with the crewmembers more directly than perhaps the classic European client. That drives design as well.” Further to that point, the Delta Design Group often finds that American owners are attentive to the crew’s quarters and their traffic patterns, wanting them to be comfortable and the crew to be happy. Miner does note that the new MLC regulations are dictating standards where there used to be free rein for owners and designers to delegate space, but, “In general, most American owners would find devoting some additional amount of floor plan to their well being is well spent in the overall game plan for having a happy boat.”



In terms of the rest of that floor plan, the Delta Design Group doesn’t see any particular trend that is distinctly American. (Neither, interestingly enough, do the other designers interviewed for this story.) Every owner has his or her vision for how rooms should be used. However, the Group does find that American owners tend to pay more attention to the nitty-gritty details of those rooms, whether they be mechanical systems or furnishings. Obernberger believes it has a lot to do with the clients’ business background. “Many of our owners have been self-made professionals and often started out on the ground floor, so to speak, with the product or service offered by their company,” he says. “The American, roll-up-your-sleeves-and-get-it-done-yourself attitude contributes to a lot of this.”

In the end, whether buyers are from the Northeast or the Northwest, whether they drive a soup-ed up sports car or a conservative-looking SUV, designers all agree that understanding the aesthetic and functional priorities for the yacht project is paramount. Sometimes designers can be proactive in suggesting styling or décor elements, but there’s a need for restraint, especially in over-designing, and there’s a need to listen to the client. Prince puts it like this: “It’s part of a designer’s responsibility to look after the owner’s best interest, not just in safety, seakeeping and performance, but also the investment. Are we designing something that’s going to look comical and silly in ten years?” ■