

THE BRITISH BUILT *FRANCES* *VICTORIA 26*

DIMENSIONS

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|-------------------------|-----------|
| LOA: | 25' 10" |
| LWL: | 21' 3" |
| BEAM: | 8' 4" |
| DRAFT: | 3' 10" |
| DISPLACEMENT, 1/2 load: | 6,800 lbs |
| BALLAST (lead): | 3,500 lbs |
| SAIL AREA: | 340 sq ft |
| DISP/L RATIO: | 316 |
| SAIL AREA/DISP RATIO: | 15.16 |



A British FRANCES at the Warsash boatyard.



The interior of a Victoria 26. It was taken with a wide-angle lens making it appear much larger than it really is .

After Tom Morris had launched a few *FRANCES*es the editor of *Yachting World* Magazine in Britain- Bernard Hayman- read an article in one of the American yachting magazines about the boat. He wrote a gushingly favorable review in *Yachting World*, lavishing praise upon the design that it probably didn't deserve. I suspect it had more than anything to do with the black and white photograph Tom had sent him of one of his boats, which was simply evocative of the fun you can have in a small boat. You be the judge—here's the photo:



The black and white photo Tom Morris sent to Yachting World.

Two months later *Yachting World* reported in its editorial,

“Two months ago a small double-ender was used to illustrate Yachting World’s leading article, a return to simplicity in cruising. That single photograph has produced more correspondence and enquiries than any other boat in the last ten years. The boat? A Frances 26, designed by C. W. Paine.”

As a consequence no less than four British boatbuilders competed to secure a license to build the *FRANCES* in the U.K. Tom and I chose the leanest and hungriest, Peter Gregory and the Desty brothers from Southampton. Peter and the Destys seemed a lot like us—young, ambitious, and ready to work their tails off to earn recognition in a field that tended to exclude upstarts. They began building *FRANCES*es in a tiny shop in Bitterne Manor and as demand grew expanded to a larger waterfront factory in nearby Warsash.

- *Photos taken with a wide-angle lens make yacht interiors look much larger than they actually are.*
- *In choosing partners, choose the ones that will work hardest.*

Peter Gregory was a marketing man—he knew nothing about boat building and left that to his partners. But boy, could he sell! He chose boats because they were expensive, and if you make a percentage selling something why not make a percentage of a big number? He always drove a huge BMW and lived at “Darkwater”, a beautiful country estate in Lepe with a half mile garden—we’d call it a lawn—sloping down to the Solent. I was pretty shy when I started, and certainly never thought of myself as selling anything. I figured if you designed good boats and never got into debt and charged less than everyone else in your field, you’d get to the top eventually.

- *If you make a percentage selling something, make a percentage of a big number.*

Peter and Ida Gregory became close friends. I began to practically commute to England. I’d help out at London Boat Show every January and Southampton Boat Show every September. And there would be one or two other visits each year getting new designs up and running. I’d stay at Darkwater and Ida would be the most perfect hostess. Ida and I would sit up nights drinking whiskey and watching movies on video while Peter was off volunteering as president of the BMIF (British Marine Industry Federation) inventing ways for British boatbuilders to out-scheme the French while not in actual fact violating European Union rules against government subsidies. Then he’d come home and try to teach me to sell myself, which he considered important.

Peter taught me, “You sell the sizzle, not the steak. In boating the realities are yard bills, rainy weekends and a depreciating asset”. But that was just the steak. He made sure that every photograph, every brochure, every advertisement depicted only those marvelous once-in-a-season days of warm sunshine and blue skies and pretty young women- never men- at the helm. I asked, “What will we do when all the marinas fill up?”

Peter told one of his salesman stories. “Two shoe salesmen go off to darkest Africa. One cables back to the home office—Might as well send me home—they don’t wear shoes down here. The other wires back to his boss—Ship me all the shoes you can—nobody’s got any yet.” It’s all in your attitude. He thought I charged too little for my work—except when I charged him, of course. “If you charge half as much as the other designers, the clients will assume you’re half as good.” I told him that I thought if you charged just a little less than your competitors, and did a little better work, the world would eventually beat a path to your door. The most difficult thing for me to accept was, “ask for the money.” He led training sessions before every boat show and he’d coach us all, “Most of the punters who’re coming to this boat show have no interest in ever buying a boat. But the ones who do are coming to our stand for a

reason, and they can’t wait to make a commitment. The only way you’ll ever know one from the other is...Ask for the money!”

- *Sell the sizzle, not the steak.*
- *If you charge half as much as other designers, clients will think you’re half as good.*
- *Charge a little less than everyone else and do a little better work.*
- *Ask for the money.*

I once asked Peter, “Why do you spend so much money going to the London Boat Show every year?”

Peter responded by asking, “What’s the capital of America?”

“Uhhh- Washington?”

“No, I mean, if you’re the best yacht designer in America, where do you go?”

“Go? I plan to stay in Maine.”

“Well, if you’re the best lawyer in Maine and want to get to the top, where do you go?”

“New York City”.

“What if you live in California?”

“Then San Francisco.”

“Or the Midwest?”

“Chicago.”

“And what’s the capital of America?”

“Washington.”

“You see we Europeans have a tremendous advantage over America. We’re city-states. If you’re young and ambitious and you think you could become the best lawyer, or actress, or yacht designer, or you name it, in England you have no choice but to come to London. If you’re French, then Paris. And so on. Our commercial centres are also our seats of government. America is too large an entity to hold together—its talent is too widely dispersed to enable its greatness to evolve. That’s why you have to go to London Boat Show. If you’re not at London Boat Show, you simply don’t count.”

London Boat Show in those days was held at Earl’s Court Exhibition Centre, a high-ceilinged old building in the middle of which they’d build a pool and a Mediterranean village surrounding it with fully rigged sailboats moored stern-to in the European fashion. The Brits all love boating and the “gate” at Earl’s Court would be huge compared to any American boat show. Debby and I would actually work the show, sitting belowdecks and answering those questions we could decipher given that some of the Scots and Welsh accents sounded pretty much like a foreign language to us. At 8pm every day they would close the show by playing “God Save the Queen” over the public address system and everyone, ourselves equally proudly, would stand at attention

with our hands over our hearts until the echo faded away. I thought—working as hard as these people do—There will always be an England!

A few years later, when not one in ten people had any idea what one was, Peter said to me, “You have to have a website—in a few years magazine advertising won’t be worth the paper it’s printed on.” “A web what?” I responded. But I knew by then not to question Peter when it came to marketing. He said, “Do you know how many people there are in the entire world named Chuck Paine? If you want a domain name called www.chuckpaine.com you had better grab it NOW!”

I had one of the first websites in the yacht design field, and I improved it in some way once every week for twenty years to keep it fun to read. For many years if you Googled “Yacht Design”, or “Yacht Designers”, www.chuckpaine.com would come up on the first page, “above the fold” as they say in the newspaper trade (meaning you didn’t have to scroll down to see the link). Nobody really knows the Google search algorithm, but that probably meant

that in the entire English speaking world more people were clicking my site than anyone else’s, and I owe Peter for that.

Little did I know in 1978 where the opportunity to build a British version of my first design would lead. More than 500 Paine-designed sailing yachts were ultimately built in Britain, by two of its largest manufacturers. In later years I began to refer to Victoria Marine and Bowman Yachts as “my British Empire” and it all happened because Tom Morris sent a black and white photograph to a magazine in London.

Two versions of the *FRANCES* were eventually made- one with a short trunk cabin called the *FRANCES 26* and another with a longer cabin named the *VICTORIA 26*. The company derived its name from Peter and Ida’s daughter- which fit in beautifully with my women’s names theme. Victoria Yachts built over 100 yachts on the *FRANCES* hull and came back for three subsequent designs- the *VICTORIA 30*, *34* and *38*.