

## Ohlson 41

### The blue-water racer/cruiser

Designer: Einar Ohlson

### FACTS AND QUOTES

Introduction by TOP Initiator, Lutz von Meyerinck

The interpretation of Einar Ohlson's design work regarding the O-35/O-36, O-38, O-41, O-44, O45 is primarily based upon the drawings including the designers notes and secondary upon information provided by previous and current owners. These frames of references are creating an explanation of how Einar Ohlson's bigger boats were evolved.

The Ohlson 41<sup>12</sup> first appeared as a long-keel boat design in late 1964<sup>3</sup>, judging from the dates on the drawings. However, it seems that the boat was redesigned prior to the first one to be built. The long-keel design was changed to a fin-keel with a rudder mounted on a skeg. This design seemed to become the first of a "family" of big boats from the drawing board of Einar Ohlson:

The **Ohlson 41**, of which we know of five boats delivered as there are drawings available for five distinct potential clients, number SY/89 – 93 and SY/105 with dates between 1065 - 68. We will deal with her later.

The **Ohlson 44** of 1966/67, number SY/97, as much as we know no boat was built, planned as a sloop. However, the design may have served as the concept for the boat to follow....

The **Ohlson 45** designed in late 1968, and one boat be built in aluminum.

In parallel work continued on

The **Ohlson 38**, number SY/100, a "mass product" (with 128 boats built) to repeat the success of the Ohlson 35/36, which had built the name of Einar Ohlson's design office in the US. She was built from GRP and was available as sloop or yawl, a hull with two different stern versions. GRP hulls could be finished in wood or GRP according to the prospective owner's choice.

Judging from the design dates, the Ohlson 41 therefore seems to be the blueprint for these boat designs. All designs have very similar hull shapes with a somewhat "longish" fin keel, a small rudder fitted on a skeg, lightweight built and LOA to Beam ratio of 3.66 – 3.71 and very similar other sailboat calculations.

From various later communications we learnt that the Ohlson 41 was built again to order only. From the drawings we know that, beyond the prospective owner, the US importer of

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1 <https://sailboat.guide/ohlson-41>

2 <https://sailboatdata.com/sailboat?filter%5Bname%5D=Ohlson+41&paginate=25&units=imperial&sort=name>

3 [http://register.veteranbatsarkivet.se/IMG/UploadedFiles/20200414171941MSF\\_20\\_2\\_O41-0009.jpg](http://register.veteranbatsarkivet.se/IMG/UploadedFiles/20200414171941MSF_20_2_O41-0009.jpg)

the Ohlson office Richard 'Dick' Sheehan of Campbell & Sheehan was involved in handling the contract.

The first boat commissioned was ordered by Ed Timken (SY/93) in 1966. Her hull was built in Corten Steel by the yard of Frans Maas in Brenskens/The Netherlands<sup>4</sup>. Frans Maas, an active sailor, designer and boat builder himself was deeply involved in the upcoming One-Ton-Race Circus and cooperated over years with then upcoming designers like Dick Carter. Using steel as material for hulls for sail yards was common in the Netherlands and his yard had a great reputation for this technology. The hull was brought to Sweden and finished by one of yards owned by the wider Ohlson family<sup>2</sup>, most likely Svineviken, though there is no proof of the yard in particular yet. Einar Ohlson's initial design had undergone modifications, probably after some intense debate with Campbell & Sheehan as a completely new stern<sup>5</sup> had been proposed with a separated rudder off the keel which was used for the boat for Mr. Summerlin already<sup>6</sup>. Mr. Summerlin put into the contract tight specs, and he again had the interior design of the boat been redrawn by Alan Guerney<sup>7</sup>, naval engineer of New York City (initially on the previous hull shape) and from one plan we know that Campbell & Sheehan<sup>8</sup> were involved in the process too.

There also was debate of the new rudder design on the skeg<sup>9</sup>: Peter DeSaix from the Steven Institute in Hoboken, N.J. had been involved and proposed a wider and shorter rudder not protruding deeper than the skeg, but Einar Ohlson was concerned this rudder was to be lifted out of the water too early when the boat was heeled. So, he offered a compromise as shown.

Of the boats designed we know the first boat was delivered to Ed Timkin<sup>10</sup> from Cleveland, OH. She was a good racer. From this letter we know that she was built in corten steel by Franz Maas of Breskens, The Netherlands. Unfortunately the name of the owner cannot be reconciled from the drawings (possible names there could be Russel, SY/92, Becton, S/Y89).

The second boat, again from corten steel and built the same way otherwise by Hitters Proost<sup>8</sup> in s-Hertogenbosch. It can only be speculated why this contract wasn't handled by Frans Maas again, a possible reason might be that Frans Maas just had enough to do with his own designs. She was delivered to Mr. Summerlin, who picked her up from the freighter *Husard*. She was named *Schuss* (*the position one takes for going downhill on skies in fast mode*), her sail number was US 1776 (an important date in the US...). She has been cruised extensively and sailed across the Atlantic to Europe by her 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> owner and is named ***Phoenix, ex-Thursday's Child, ex-Menemshabuilt***. Summerlin describes her in that letter as a

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4 Letter by John Summerlin to Kathy and Steve Wolff, dated Aug 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1979

5 [http://register.veteranbatsarkivet.se/IMG/UploadedFiles/20200506152928MSF\\_20\\_2\\_O41-0058.jpg](http://register.veteranbatsarkivet.se/IMG/UploadedFiles/20200506152928MSF_20_2_O41-0058.jpg)

6 [http://register.veteranbatsarkivet.se/IMG/UploadedFiles/20200429151607MSF\\_20\\_2\\_O41-0042.jpg](http://register.veteranbatsarkivet.se/IMG/UploadedFiles/20200429151607MSF_20_2_O41-0042.jpg)

7 [http://register.veteranbatsarkivet.se/IMG/UploadedFiles/20200429151515MSF\\_20\\_2\\_O41-0039.jpg](http://register.veteranbatsarkivet.se/IMG/UploadedFiles/20200429151515MSF_20_2_O41-0039.jpg)

8 [http://register.veteranbatsarkivet.se/IMG/UploadedFiles/20200429151427MSF\\_20\\_2\\_O41-0035.jpg](http://register.veteranbatsarkivet.se/IMG/UploadedFiles/20200429151427MSF_20_2_O41-0035.jpg)

9 [http://register.veteranbatsarkivet.se/IMG/UploadedFiles/20200506153235MSF\\_20\\_2\\_O41-0070.jpg](http://register.veteranbatsarkivet.se/IMG/UploadedFiles/20200506153235MSF_20_2_O41-0070.jpg)

10 Letter by John Summerlin to Kathy and Steve Wolff of May, 15th, 1979

fast boat with an overall 2<sup>nd</sup> in the Northern Ocean Racing Circuit “It wasn’t the boat’s fault that she wasn’t 1<sup>st</sup> (Damn it”).

The third boat (SY/91) **Gyre**, *ex-Alegria* was built by the Molich Yard in Hundested/Denmark in double planked wood. She was ordered by Ed Moore. Her current name is *GYRE*. She was offered to the market around 2011<sup>11</sup> and under her new owner she received a major upgrade by Rockport Marine<sup>12</sup> in 2012/13.

The 4<sup>th</sup> boat built was **Ariana**<sup>13</sup>, SY/89, built in 1966 again in wood. The yard is unknown. She was yawl-rigged and initially based in Deer Isle, Maine. She was ordered by Henry Becton, then sailed by his son Jeffrey Becton. She has been actively and successfully racing by Jeffrey Becton in the Gulf of Maine as of at least 2012. In additions she did some big ocean races in 1969 & 1971.

A fifth boat, named *Esperance* and maybe *Saturn* was built in 1968 GRP by Bristol Yachts<sup>14</sup>. According to TOP’s files and drawings this must be the boat designated for Mr. Oberlin, SY/105. She was located In Maryland from 1968 - about 2000. Her hull was black, white cabin & decks, teak trim. Bought by Gordon & Lara Scriba in about 2002 in Maryland; they re-named her *Kaizen*. They totally renovated the fiberglass on the under body; it had bad boat pox! They relocated to Vancouver, Canada in 2005 & had the boat shipped west. They lived for several years aboard with their first child (about 2010 - 2013). In 2013, Gordon sailed with crew down to San Francisco Bay, then the family lived aboard in Emeryville until 2015 when they bought a bigger sailboat & donated Kaizen to the Boy Scouts. The Boy Scouts had to lease the boat for 3 years before selling it; Gordon did not know who owns it now or where it is located.

These seem to be the five 41-footers altogether. This seems to be confirmed by a quote of Chares “Butch” Ulmer below.

#### Data

<b>Length</b>	41 feet – 12.5 meter
<b>Lenght on waterline</b>	8.7 meter
<b>Beam</b>	10 feet 9 inches – 3.28 meter
<b>Draft</b>	1.9 meter
<b>Displacement</b>	9,072 kilos
<b>Sail area</b>	68.6 m2

#### Yards

Hulls in steel by  
Frans Maas, Breskens, The Netherlands  
Hitters Proost Yard, s’-Hertogenbosch, the Netherlands

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11 <https://yachtingsolutions.com/boat/1967/ohlson/41-sloop/1137>

12 <http://rockportmarine.blogspot.com/2012/04/gyre-ohlson-cruiser-transformed.html>

13 Email by Mrs Cathy Siegel to Mrs Christina Stenberg, dated 6 July 2021

14 Email by Mrs Cathy Siegel to Mrs Christina Stenberg, dated 6 July 2021

Complete boat in wood by Paul Molich in Hundested, Denmark , the yard for a second boat built in wood is unknown.

**Material available:** Drawings, photos, communication with individual owners.

Here is what others got to say:

**Charles "Butch" Ulmer, UK Sailmakers New York**

I knew Dick Sheehan well. The Ohlson boats he sold were both fast and good looking. I did two Bermuda races (1968 & 1970) on a Ohlson 41 yawl. The '68 race was the first time I skippered a boat in the Bermuda Race Andover in 1970 the owner, Mr. Henry Becton, skippered the boat with the majority of the crew being the AMB Syndicate from LYC (Howie McMichael, Joe Fontanella, Pat O'Neal and me). See the photo below. This was the year we rounded a tower west of Bermuda and reached the finish line by leaving Bermuda to port. Recently I have been making sails for an Ohlson 38 named Tynaje owned by Bill Gunther of Guilford, CT. Tynaje was originally named Pursuit and owned by Dick Sheehan. A few years ago, I convinced Bill to put a sprit on the boat and on his first weekend of racing he won the Fall Off Soundings Regatta. Bill just sold Tynaje to Dan Fisher of Sachem's Head".

**Steve Wolf, owner Ohlson 41 PHOENIX**

" My wife and I bought a derelict steel Ohlson 41 in the late '70's, and spent a year in Florida disassembling, scaling rust, reassembling, and getting her ready for cruising. Because she had been left in disrepair and we resurrected her, she was renamed "Phoenix" (previous names were "Thursday's Child" and "Menemsha"). We sailed her to Europe, Africa, South America, the Caribbean, and back home to San Francisco, a total of 27,000 miles in 4 years... including a stop in Gothenburg where we tried unsuccessfully to contact Einer Ohlson to show him his work. Our hull was originally built with extraordinary skill out of 2.5mm Corten steel, to the exact Ohlson lines, in Holland and transported to Gothenburg for completion. The interior had been somewhat redesigned by Alan Gurney prior to construction, though it is basically the same as other Ohlson 41's. The boat participated in the Bermuda Race at least once, and I understand was the only steel hull boat to win its class one year in the SORC (Southern Ocean Racing Conference) - though I have no evidence.

On that extended trip she proved herself over and over again - she was arguably the perfect cruising sailboat, and (did I fail to mention)... beautiful.

We sold her in 1984, and she went through two subsequent owners and trips to Mexico and Hawaii, and, through an interesting set of circumstances, we reconnected with her, and re-purchased her a few months ago. Her previous owner spent two years doing a very extensive refit of all the critical bits (lots of hull and deck work), but precious little cosmetic work. We're correcting that now, removing years of paint over mahogany, though I'm not sure we'll remove the horrendous hard dodger. Our intent, as soon as I retire (shortly) is to take it easy - first trip to the channel islands in Southern California, then Mexico... then who knows."

**Christopher G. Kennedy, owner Ohlson 41 GYRE**

I purchased the awesome 41 on the recommendation of my broker a fellow named Jim Payne. Jim is regarded as the Premier wooden boat broker in the eastern United States. He has a sister ship which is a steal version of the O-41".

"There are very few private boats which have hosted more sailors having a great time than Gyre".

**Gyre - Ohlson Cruiser Transformed, text by Maria Simpson, Rockport Marine**

"GYRE is a sturdy, ocean-going cruising boat, originally crafted to meet the requirements for the Bermuda Race. Designed by prominent Swedish designer Einar Ohlson, she, like other Ohlson vessels, is a production boat. She was built in Denmark by Paul Molich, a respected builder and designer in his own right. The boat is built with edge-glued single planking stiffened with intercostal plywood, an inner layer of plywood laminations between the frames. Her oak frames are comparatively light when compared to other wooden boats of her era. There are several other handsome Ohlson designs in these waters, notably DULCINEA, cared for at this yard, and KRISTIN, a frequent winner of the Eggemoggin Reach Regatta".

**More quotes**

"A gorgeous classic steel boat".

"A thoroughbred"