

Excerpts from *Swiftsure – The First Fifty Years*, by Humphry Golby and Shirley Hewitt (1980)

Always a proving ground for new designs, the 1961 Trans-Pac had an even split with three K-40s and three Lapworth 36s. Lapworth had arrived. P 47

*Tricia*, Pat Leslie's new Lapworth 36, was to place consistently near the top for the next decade, was third. P 63

New developments in materials and building methods allowed California's trend-setting yacht designers, George Kettenburg and Bill Lapworth, to catch the crest of the new design wave and ride it to spectacular success. Both were leaders in designing boats to take advantage of the existing CCA rules. Essentially, this had to do with how much freeboard could be pushed to windward with small sail area.

A former international 14 sailor, Lapworth influenced world yacht design by popularizing the light displacement trend on the west coast, taking the dialing dinghy hull and applying it to larger yachts.

In this respect, design had come full circle from the 1896 article in *Rudder* magazine on light displacement, by Perry. The dinghy form for larger boats had been tried and abandoned in 1910 because of structural problems encountered when building in wood.

Lapworth's timing was perfect. The advent of new materials, new glues and construction techniques, especially the use of fibreglass for hulls, made the dinghy form not only feasible, but economically profitable for larger boats.

Was it luck of the draw or coincidence that brought a winning skipper and crew together with a winning design in 1957? One of Vancouver's top Star helmsmen and Six Metre owner, Rickard was casting about for a boat which he could comfortably cruise as well as race. From Stan Davies, he heard about the impressive racing results of the Lapworth 36 being built in Costa Mesa by Chapman and Kalayjian.

Very good on any point of sail, the L36 was the first of the modern boats. Later, her big sister, the Cal 40 was the evolutionary development produced in response to the urging of L36 owners. Fatter and higher sided than contemporary designs, the L36 tended to be a little trickier to sail, with some tendency to broach if the helmsman wasn't careful. She had a comparatively long keel with the rudder attached to the keel, rather than a separate spade rudder.

At the same time, another airline pilot and Star skipper, Pat Leslie, had the plans and even some of the wood for a Seafair. He was persuaded to abandon this project, joining with Rickard and Bill Moore to build simultaneously the first three

L36s in Canada: red-hulled *Tricia*, green-hulled *Winsome III* (all Rickard's boats have had green hulls) and Moore's *Nutmeg*.

Because plans had been brought out for Lapworth's California builder, Chapman, details had to be worked out with the Americans so that Taylor's Vancouver Boatworks could begin construction. The three bought their materials collectively, with Rickard and Leslie doing much of the building themselves at the boatyard, along with the workmen, even to pouring their own lead keels. (Moore's boat was completely built by Taylor.)

Mahogany strip planked, edge nailed and glued, the boats were built over a jig, with no ribs. The jigs were torn out, leaving the bare hull inside. Then, the ribs were bent in on the inside. Built at home, the masts were glued box section spruce, as were the boom and spinnaker pole. At first, they used English sails; later, all genoas were made by Vancouver's Miller Brothers. In 1958, the three boats were launched together over a two day period. They were in the water and sailing for approximately \$9500 each.

In 1961, *Winsome III* swept every major trophy in class during the July PIYA Regatta, including the long distance race, to take Outstanding Boat honours once again. However, regular skipper and owner, Ches Rickard, a senior Air Canada pilot, was in Eastern Canada taking a DC8 course.

At the helm during that summer of triumph was crack small boat sailor, Bonar Davis. Sailing his third Swiftsure in an L36, Davis showed the yachting world that Vancouver sailors had depth as well as excellence. Davis had crewed for Pat Leslie in 1959 when *Tricia*, the first L36 to enter Swiftsure, netted a third overall in a 39 boat fleet for her maiden effort. Leslie improved his position to second overall the next year, establishing a "bridesmaid" pattern which was to persist, compiling over the years probably the most consistent overall performance of any Canadian yacht. In the same year, 1960, Davis accompanied Rickard in *Winsome's* Swiftsure debut: 14<sup>th</sup> overall in a 45 boat fleet. The three back-to-back victories were no accident of fate, however, as Rickard was already one of the most successful racing skippers in British Columbia.

For Swiftsure racing, carrying six, skipper Rickard set no watches. They just drove her hard, reasoning that Swiftsure was rather like running the mile. There is no time to really rest. While it is not quite a sprint, neither is it a marathon race. The main thing was to keep everybody rested, although the crew never even took sleeping bags along.

Of the 1961 race, overall winning skipper Bonar Davis recalls: "We hadn't done awfully well going out. I remember rounding the Lightship, in around 17<sup>th</sup> place, at 5 or 6am. On the beat back, we could see boats ahead all making for the American shore. There was no sense in following them, because there was no way we'd beat them doing that. So, we headed for the Canadian shore. Got over there and realized that was a mistake. So we went back to the American shore. The boats that had been ahead of us had all gone to the Canadian

shore so we thought that was super, and stayed on the American shore. That was really what won the race for us. The west wind filled in, and we were able to reach across and left the boats behind that had been ahead of us, originally on the American shore.

It was *Winsome III* again in 1962, but this time Ches Rickard was available to pilot his Lapworth 36 to the Swiftsure Trophy for the second consecutive year.

1963, a windless start combined with a strong flood tide to set many boats away from the line in one of the slowest Swiftsure starts ever recorded, a significant factor which spawned one of the most celebrated protests ever filed in Pacific Northwest yacht racing. The declared winner, *Thetis*, was protested by Lol Killam's *Velaris* during the very early drifting. Although it was over a year before the protest was upheld, ultimately, *Winsome III* emerged victorious to set a Swiftsure record which may never again be equaled: three consecutive back-to-back victories.

1964, a strong wind streak allowed a flying spinnaker ride home on Sunday afternoon. Under these conditions the Lapworth 36 again proved the merits of its design, winning the overall trophy for the fourth consecutive year. This time the prize went to an American yacht, a brand new boat out of Tacoma, Gerry Smith's *Bandit*.

1965, Pat Leslie's *Tricia*, second overall, placed highest of the 10 competing Lapworth 36s.