# AQUÍ NO MÁS— Where You'll Find the Lorences

Text by Ed Lawrence
Photos by Judith K. Lawrence

At some point in his description of the boats he builds at Schooner Creek Boat Works, Steve Rander finds his voice sounding as though it's stuck in a groove.

"We are building wooden cruising boats that are light, fast, and safe, but which also offer crews the ability to sail comfortably on long ocean voyages," he explains, as he has explained to umpteen skeptics on umpteen previous occasions when questioned about his philosophy of boatbuilding.

Rander employs what some describe as unorthodox methods to build wooden boats in a small yard on the Columbia River, 90 miles from the ocean in the heart of Oregon's timber country. The irony is that the boats he builds are race winners, record-setting performers that stretch their legs in long-distance ocean races.

In comparison to the now-familiar ultralight 70-footers designed for the Southern California racing circuit that are constantly tweaked to maximize downwind performance, Rander's methods are somewhat revolutionary and are certainly demanding attention. Last July, his Tom Wylie-designed RAGE established a record in the West Marine Pacific Cup, a race from San Francisco to Oahu, in which the yacht knocked seven hours off a record set in 1986 by Bill Lee's legendary MERLIN. But, whereas the crews of other competing yachts were spending days in spartan environments and existing on freeze-dried food, RAGE's crew of eight slept in comfort in permanent berths, and ate hot meals prepared in a spacious galley.

The RAGE project was the culmination of 10 years of tinkering, and such was its success that it's no surprise to discover many of her construction and design elements being incorporated into the yard's latest project: a 52′ performance cruiser being built for Keith and Laurie Lorence of Seattle, who plan to cruise with their 11-year-old son, Ryan. "We intend to head south until the temperature reaches 80°F, then turn left and raft up to the first island we come to," says Keith, a sailmaker and prominent racer.

*As Steve Rander sands off the excess epoxy on the first of the exterior diagonal veneers, a co-worker (see hand, bottom left) removes the temporary fastenings.*

Having crewed aboard the winning boat in the first Whitbread Round-the-World Race, and won National Championships in the Olson 30 and J-35 classes, Keith Lorence is keen on speed, but he also understands the benefits of creature comforts on long passages.

California-based Tom Wylie was selected to develop the design for several reasons, among which are an ability to design IMS race-winners, like KROP-DUSTER and WARSPITE, and a conviction that cruising boats can be designed for easy handling by two people. A group of performance cruisers and 30–39′ catboats sailed by singlehanders are evidence of this conviction. The fact that Wylie and Rander had collaborated closely on the RAGE project was also a plus, especially since Keith initially envisioned a design that would incorporate the best design/construction elements of contemporary yachts that perform well on any point of sail.

Power for the new boat will come from a 63′ masthead rig, flying a total of 1,184 sq ft of sail in the mainsail and the 100%

jib. Compared to similar-sized boats, she's lightweight, displacing only 21,000 lbs. Her primary ballast is 9,000 lbs of lead in an 8′-deep keel with a moderately flared bulb. At Keith's suggestion, however, additional ballast is provided by water tanks located outboard and amidships. Wylie has designed a gravity-flow system that connects 97-gallon tanks port and starboard and provides the equivalent weight of four crew members perched on the rail—it should mean that she will sail flat when closehauled or on a close reach.

Laurie Lorence's challenge to the designer was to create an interior that "is light and airy and has room in which to move." Thus, the design includes a plethora of portlights, three overhead hatches, and 3½ × 24″ Lexan ports bedded in the topsides. Light will reflect off interior surfaces of natural mahogany and white paint. Accommodating Laurie's desire for an exercise area also led to a custom dining table designed to be easily stowed. The master stateroom, located in the starboard quarter, is large enough for a queen-sized berth and private head, and has more than 6′ of headroom. The nav station is located opposite.

Ryan's quarters are in the forepeak where he, too, has a private head, but he will share some of his space with sails and Keith's surfboard.

The cockpit, which Wylie calls "the sunporch," reflects a desire for dual-purpose use. Seven-foot-long seats offer plenty of room for the crew while the boat is under sail, but can double as sleeping berths when the thermometer heads into high numbers. Two steering wheels will be used to sail the boat: a four-footer to handle heavy seas on ocean passages, a three-footer for gunkholing.

Steve Rander has been honing his boatbuilding skills since the age of seven when his father challenged him to cut a block of wood with fine edges and perfect corners to exact measurements. By age eight, he was cutting bungs and keeping the steam box going while his father built a double-ended lateen-rigged dinghy (the family's first boat), and by the time he reached high school, he had built his own multihull. After spending years as a boat carpenter and rigger for several yards, he opened Schooner Creek in the late '70s, and began experimenting with new methods of marrying wood and epoxies.

"I was searching for a way to use new technology in reducing the displacement of wooden boats without compromising on structural integrity," he says, referring to the construction of his own boat, MAGIC CARPET (see WB No. 90).

"CARPET was designed as a racer-cruiser by Bob Smith and was constructed of a unique blend of wood veneers with a foam core, and newly developed WEST SYSTEM epoxies," he explains. With 50,000 miles under CARPET's keel, and three Pacific Cup victories, Steve Rander has had little cause to doubt his system of building and thus employed similar methods in the construction of RAGE 10 years later.

The result? A 70-footer that displaces only 21,000 lbs.

"I think her light displacement makes her as easy to handle as most 40-footers," he says; and to him that's an important point, since he's only 5′8″ and weighs 138 lbs.

After months of discussions between the Lorences, Steve Rander, and Tom Wylie, the decision was made that the new boat should follow the same path.

"The core of the hull is a 1″ layer of Klegecell. The inner skin is ⅛″ cedar, over which we are laying ⅛″ of meranti [a light-to-medium-weight hardwood comparable in weight and strength to African mahogany—Ed.], followed by one layer of 6-oz fiberglass. The exterior is also ⅛″ cedar, over which we are using a ⅛″ layer of fir, then two layers of 6-oz 'glass cloth," Rander explains. Decks are constructed of 1″ Klegecell sandwiched between ¼″ marine fir plywood, and overlaid by a 6-oz layer of 'glass. After fairing with longboards, all surfaces will be sprayed with Awlgrip.

"The result will be a boat that is stronger, pound for pound, than one of balsa core construction, and less expensive," Rander says. "She'll also be very quiet when underway."

Keith Lorence is sensitive to the strength issue—he's heard friends describe hull failures in the Whitbread Race when foam cores and Kevlar skins delaminated in heavy seas. "I'm convinced that the wood veneers and foam core will combine to provide both strength and elasticity, so I'm not worried about the hull coming apart," he says.

A finishing touch to the project was provided by the Hispanic parcel post driver who services Lorence's sail loft.

"When we were searching for a name for the boat," Keith Lorence told me, "I told him we were looking for something that reflected our state of mind. A couple of days later he suggested 'AQUÍ NO MÁS.' Translated from the Spanish, it means 'Here no more.'" And, one of these days, that's exactly where you'll find the Lorences.

*A 1″ layer of Klegecell—a closed-cell PVC foam core—acts as a vertical web separating the two skins of wood veneers and 'glass cloth, and creating a stiff, light structure.*

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