ELECTRA-FYING

An involved owner and an accommodating builder teamed up to meticulously create a yacht brimming with custom, automated features not typically found on all boats.

Words by **Joyce Black**; photography by **Billy Black**.

The first time I saw George Wallner, it was just his feet. We were on an early sea trial of his new 94ft Hunt-designed *Electra* and he was deep under the helmstation looking for a connection for the GPS. It wasn't typical behavior for an owner since the boat was packed with yard employees, but George Wallner is not a typical owner.

Wallner is an experienced yachtsman, but it's his life as an electrical entrepreneur that had the most interesting influence on the new boat built in Thomaston, Maine by Lyman-Morse Boatbuilding. Wallner was a pioneer in the electronic funds transfer business and the odds are good that your credit card is swiped regularly through his machines. Bulletproof reliability is an absolute requirement in that industry and Wallner reinvented the electrical system on his new boat for reliability and simplicity.

"Starting your boat and pulling away from the dock should be like pulling your car out of the garage," Wallner explained. "You don't have to open the engine compartment to throw a bunch of switches or turn on breakers – you just turn the key and go." It's that whole cumbersome system of switches and breakers that Wallner set out to improve.

"An electro-mechanical circuit breaker is not a switch," he said. "It is a circuit breaker, but it is used as a switch on boats all the time. That is wrong. When was the last time you touched a breaker on your car?" Wallner also distrusts the software that is increasingly used to manage power on large yachts, preferring hard-wired circuits he designed and built himself.

"Like many, I wanted an automated boat. I've tried PC-based software solutions and found them unreliable. Even when the boat-management software itself is reliable, the system it operates on is not. One day there may be an industrial-strength operating system that will be good enough to run an entire boat. Until then, I prefer application-specific hardware," he said. "On a boat, the real excitement is when there is no excitement."

Wallner developed his ideas on how to improve boats during the ten years he owned his previous Lyman-Morse, the 89ft *Tumblehome* – but really focused on the boat when he retired in 2003. "George had plenty of experience owning a boat this size before commissioning a custom yacht," said Peter Boyce, principal designer for C. Raymond Hunt Associates. *Tumblehome*, another Hunt design, was built for an owner who died before the boat was commissioned, so Wallner took the boat as is, and liked what he got.

"*Electra* is extremely similar to *Tumblehome*," Boyce explained, "it's five feet longer, but has a very similar layout. The big difference is the performance. *Tumblehome* topped out at 22 knots while *Electra*'s top speed is 30."

Boyce pointed out that despite the added horsepower and

At 94 feet, *Electra* is the ideal length for her owner, who often travels to the Bahamas and take out the boat himself.

The saloon, dining area and galley are arranged in an open plan, with bamboo floors and red birch bulkheads and furniture.

increased fuel capacity, *Electra* is the same weight as *Tumblehome* because of the design and construction of the new boat. Lyman-Morse's resin-infused hulls and other components along with cored veneered furniture add up to a strong, light, high-performance boat.

The Hunt deep-V hull that delivers a combination of economy at displacement speeds, yet cruises at 25 knots, fits right into how Wallner uses the boat. Based in Miami, Wallner's passion for diving takes him regularly to the Bahamas where he'll dive right off the back of *Electra* rather than launching the dinghy. "Sometimes we'll anchor 6 to 7 times a day," Wallner said. "It has to be really easy, even for a small crew."

One of Wallner's simple innovations is using a regular wireless garage door-opener to raise and lower the anchor. "One of the problems with the marine industry is a lack of manufacturing volume," Wallner observes, "Quality depends on quantity. It's not unusual for a company to build only 1,000 pieces of something. For most consumer goods, that is still the testing phase, but in the marine industry this is the gear we end up using. I bet this cheap garage door-opener is a lot more reliable than some very expensive marine-grade stuff."

During the cruise I took on *Electra* from Boston to Thomaston, Wallner was unhappy about a software glitch in his new GPS. He knew the manufacturer could have fixed it before the unit was released and was considering throwing it off the bridge into the Gulf of Maine. I mentioned that even though he was right – a GPS should be reliable – most people just live with those little

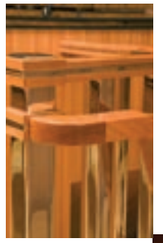
ELECTRA'S CLEAN LAYOUT

ACCOMODATES HER RELAXED, CALM ATMOSPHERE.

problems. He quoted George Bernard Shaw: "The reasonable man adapts himself to the world; the unreasonable one persists in trying to adapt the world to himself. Therefore, all progress depends on the unreasonable man."

So how is the process of building a custom yacht for an unreasonable man? J.B. Turner is the managing partner at Lyman-Morse and is the liaison between the owners and the yard. "We had a great time building the boat for George and learned lots of things in the process," said Turner. "George was extremely involved and did tons of research on everything from the air-conditioning to the stabilizers."

On our trip up to Thomaston, Wallner was disappointed in the flat seas since he was eager to test the Quantum Marine's MagLift™ rotary stabilizers, an innovative design currently in use on only a few yachts around the world. They use the lift generated by a spinning cylinder to interrupt the roll of the boat both



Concerned with functionality rather than fussy trim, *Electra*'s owner chose pure simplicity as the core of her design.

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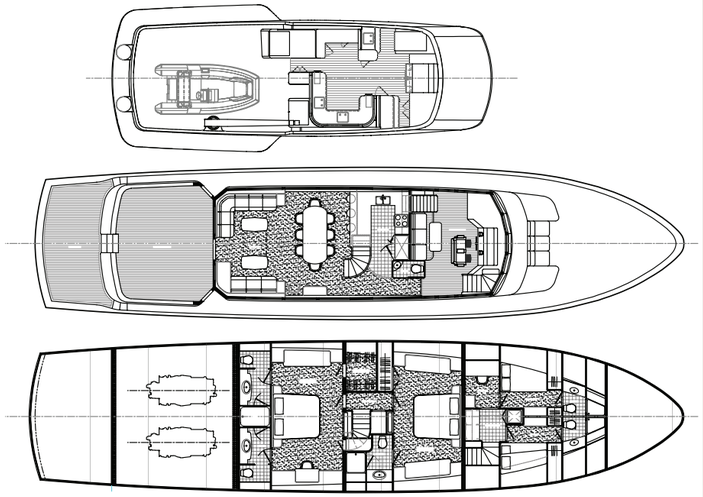

at low speeds and at anchor. They are hydraulically actuated and retractable, so when not in use they have minimal drag.

Wallner's air-conditioning research focused on eliminating unnecessary noise. When he and his skipper, Roy Meavers, were touring boat shows, the builders and designers looking for ideas for the boat were close to choosing Marine Air air-conditioning, but visited the factory to see if they could improve the system by making it run more quietly. They worked with the engineers to design baffles, detours and sound-breaks that make it nearly silent.

One of the things Waller actively resisted in the whole process was the tendency to let the length creep. "I believe lots of people are going to be downsizing from megayachts," he speculated. "Ninety-four feet is the right size for most of the marinas we like to go to; it is easy to take to the Bahamas and I like to be able to take the boat out by myself."

There are still generous crew quarters, a master stateroom with his-and-hers heads, but only one guest stateroom – a large one for Wallner's brother, Paul. The saloon, dining area and galley are arranged in an open plan with bamboo floors, red birch bulkheads and furniture, and stainless trim to bring light into the boat. The layout accommodates the relaxed atmosphere onboard. Meavers and Wallner worked together on most of the projects and Suzette Wight, who came to Wallner with *Tumblehome* ten years ago, makes sure the boat is safe, hospitable and immaculate.

Our ride up to Thomaston was at the end of a shakedown cruise. The boat was headed back to the yard and the punch-list looked long, but consisted mostly of little things. Wallner will take final delivery in October, just over three years from commissioning the design, and will then start running over to the Bahamas for lunch. With *Electra*'s 4,500-mile fuel capacity, he's talking about taking a longer cruise through the Panama Canal and up to the Pacific Northwest.

J.B. Turner is happy that Wallner came back to Lyman-Morse for the boat he'd been planning for so long. "The bottom line," Turner said, "is that he ended up with the boat he wants, and he uses his boats a lot. That whole process is something we are very good at. We love ending up with a happy owner." And Wallner *is* happy: "I believe this is the best 94-footer in the world right now." ❑

With economy and speed in mind, *Electra*'s hull was built using the SCRIMP process.

SPECS

LOA: 94ft 10.5in (29m)
LWL: 84ft 11.75in (26m)
Beam: 22ft 75in (6.7m)
Draft: 4.5ft (1.37m)
Displacement: 183,531lbs
Engines:
2 x MTU/Detroit 16V 2000 M91 2,000bhp @ 2,350rmp
Propellers: H&H Propellers
Speed (max/cruise):
30/25 knots
Fuel capacity:
5,140 gallons
Range:
4,000miles @ 11.5 knots;
1,000 miles @ 25 knots
Bow thruster: Quantum
Stabilizers:
Quantum Maglift ARG 3000 Series
Generators:
2 x Northern Lights 25kW
Watermakers:
Sea Recovery
Freshwater capacity:
600 gallons
Security system:
Closed circuit video monitoring
Monitoring system: Atlantitech Tank
Air-conditioning: Marine Air
Communication/Navigation electronics:
Furuno, ICOM, KVH, Maretron, Northstar, VEI
Entertainment systems:
Sony, Toshiba, Audiovox, Sirius, Infinity, Bazooka
Owner and guests: 4
Crew: 4
Tender: 15ft Novurania
Tender-launching system:
Marquipt 2000 Crane
Passerelle: N/A
Paint: AwlGrip, Interlux
Construction: SCRIMP
Classification: N/A
Naval architecture:
C. Raymond Hunt Associates, Inc.
Exterior styling:
Owner/Designer
Interior designer:
Owner/Builder
Price guide: $12M
Builder/Year:
Lyman-Morse Boatbuilding Co., Inc/2007
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