

The special yacht: – TARANTELLA – SWAN 36

Picture text: Eternal Virtue. 50 years ago the first Swan yacht was launched. The founder of the yard relied on a combination of GRP, series production, and traditional values. TARANTELLA is still showing up as an ambassadress for her brand.



Picture text: At the anniversary the guys that originally built her were sailing this yacht, to be considered one of the most remarkable present day GRP classics

Many yachtsmen consider FRP yachts to be industrial bulk ware, lacking character and almost throw-away items. But this is not true. There are definitely yachts with a history of development worth telling. Yachts that did remarkable contributions to the introduction of new materials and the birth of new yards.

Since 50 years the brand Nautor's Swan is a synonym for premium-quality yachts. When the yard was founded in Pietarsaari, Finland, such a worldwide success was not foreseeable. Skeptical watchers of the new enterprise expected an early end. When the yard applied for a piece of ground the town did not grant this as they did not believe in the business idea.

It was the vision of the 29 year old Pekka Koskenkylä to start a yard building sailing yachts far north on the shores of the Bothnian Bay. He had studied economics, and after spending some time in the

USA was employed at the paper mill in Pietarsaari selling paper sacks to the sugar industry. Probably a rather uninspiring job.

His dreams were related to activities on the water. In his teens he built canoes, but the interest for sailing did not appear until after high school. In the barn of his stepfather he built an 11 m yacht in his spare time during two years, but sold it before launching to a Helsinki dentist. "I made a good amount of money, and thought that boatbuilding would be an easy way to make more if it" he remembers during the Nautor 50-years celebrations in the summer 2016.



A pioneer: The former paper bag salesman, business economist, and self-educated boatbuilder Pekka Koskenkylä, 80, started the Nautor yard in 1966. With the combination of GRP and series production he revolutionized boatbuilding in Finland. Also the Baltic yard emerged from Nautor.

His business plan was based on two ideas, which at the time, and considering the conservative sailing circles, appeared to be outright revolutionary. For one thing the boats should be of GRP, a new building material consisting of glass fiber and polyester resin, so far used mainly to build small power boats. His other idea to build rationally and cost-effectively in series meant a departure from the traditional way of building boats. At the time money was not discussed in connection with having yachts built. Yachts suited for offshore conditions were mostly built as one-offs, and therefore very expensive. If one could not afford this, the choice was to just forget it.

There were already a few yards building GRP boats. In Germany for example it was Willi Asmus in Glückstadt at the river Elbe taking up this new technology, and in 1964 he delivered the first HANSEAT 6.5 KR. The Asmus yard built 378 boats until 1990, of 16 different types, and this can be described as small batch building.

Koskenkylä conceived a new strategy, aiming at building as many hulls as possible out of an expensive female mould. Each additional hull reduced the cost, and left more money. In the beginning his budget was so tight that he kept his job at the paper mill, as this provided an additional advantage. At the time long distance calls were expensive, and he was able to use his office telephone, his bosses certainly not being aware of this.

A lucky choice was his decision to use Sparkman & Stephens as designers. The leading yacht designers worldwide at the time did not even reply to the first request from Mister Nobody. His repeated phone calls, however, resulted in a meeting in Helsinki with Rod Stephens, and finally the New York office released the drawings for a 36 foot yacht.

These drawings were not made exclusively for Nautor, other yards around the world had already built some 60 yachts in wood according to them. An S&S promotional from 1967 explains: "Swan 36 is based on the successful HESTIA from 1957. Two modified versions from 1964 did well in the Baltic. In the One-Ton Cup 1965 two of this design, DIANA and HESTIA took the two first places".

This design was modified with a shorter keel and a separate rudder, this improved the performance and gave better control in downwind conditions. CYBELLE had this modification, and excelled 1967

on the French Atlantic coast and in Denmark. The VATOR yard in Finland had already built two of this design in wood (see YACHT 4/2011).

The production in Pietarsaari thus started with a design enjoying regatta success, but was also aimed at the ordinary cruising sailor. At the time a cruising yacht with separate rudder was considered radical. The GRP version came out with the same weight as the wooden sisterships.



Popular design: The Swan 36 in build. Some 60 slightly different issues of this same S&S design #1710 were built at various yards around the world.

The building of GRP yachts requires two cost intensive steps. To begin with an exact and well finished male plug is needed for laying up the female mould. When the mould is ready the plug has no further use, and is normally scrapped. But in this case the new yard had agreed in advance with S&S and their client intending to build a wooden 36-footer, that the plug will be built and finished as a yacht for him. The plug has since been given the hull number 000, and sails on the Finnish south coast under the name Catharina II.

At the time GRP yachts usually had lots of naked white areas, and this was considered a less desirable and outright unpleasant feature. Koskenkylä therefore used wood for the cockpit and hatch coamings, and the toe rails as well. Also, most visible surfaces in the interior were of wood. Later when the customers began to accept GRP and aluminium, the toe rails were changed to aluminium with the characteristic round holes, and this became a trademark for Swans during several decades.

Some people suspected that the new GRP materials would have a short life, and at the time nobody really knew. The yachts were built according to Lloyd's Register of Shipping scantling rules, but also the rule makers lacked long time experience of the GRP aging effects. It appears some additional thickness was specified because of this, in hindsight not a bad move.

The first yachts were built in an old tannery, which had to be emptied before the work could begin. The door opening was just sufficient when the hulls were pulled out on wooden cradles. A red FORD truck was used for the pulling. "Probably the only vehicle around suitable for such work" the workers remembered the old times.

There were some peculiar events around getting the first yacht sold. In order to get publicity Koskenkylä decided that the buyer had to be a well known yachtsman. For this he had picked Heinz Ramm-Schmidt, a successful racer who had just sold his 9.5 m Viking yacht. An easy meat perhaps.

50 years later at the yard anniversary, the 96-year Ramm-Schmidt remembers with a smile: "Pekka visited me for the first time in December 1966 in my company office in Helsinki, but I had no time for him. A week later he was there again. It was late, and somebody let him in. Without a word he spread some construction drawings on my desk, and I looked at them for a considerable time. The plans were for a 37 foot yacht by S&S. Finally Pekka asked: "Do you like your new yacht?" He knew

that I needed a new yacht. But this was a One-Tonner, and I could hardly afford such a big yacht. Again this time Pekka left without an order.

“When I came home one day before Christmas, I found Pekka in our kitchen, where he presented his project with all its nice features to my wife Ebba and our four children. I could see in the happy faces of my family that they already had bought the yacht, without asking me”. However, I signed the contract, and Pekka declared that at this moment the Nautor yard made its start.

“Fortunately the price corresponded to a Half-Tonner. So far I had only seen the large size drawings. I knew that this would be a fast yacht, however I consulted with Rod Stephens, and got good advice. But I took a risk!” remembers the yard’s first customer.

A hectic time followed. Pekka rented an empty tannery building in the village of Kållby, and engaged a GRP-professional, as well as boatbuilders from the area. But the production could not start before he had found two more customers for sharing the costs. “I had nothing except the drawings to show. This was my problem, but the deal with Ramm-Schmidt could be used to convince the others.”

The Ramm-Schmidts now followed closely what happened at the yard, 500 km north of Helsinki. “We went there a few times to follow the build, and it developed into a contest amongst the three first owners. Each one wanted to see his boat launched first. In the spring we parked a caravan nearby, and checked the progress every day” remembers Ramm-Schmidt.

The targeted deadline May 1st could not be met. “The delay was 10 weeks, but have you ever heard of a yacht that was ready on time?” pondered the old man.

The launching was on July 15th but the transport from the yard got into serious trouble on its way to the harbour. The distance was 15 km along quite bad roads, but a tree-lined alley stopped the transport early – the trees were too close together. The Nautor guys got hold of a chain saw, and cut down the trees on one side. But soon after the trailer broke down, and ended up in the ditch. The village blacksmith made a new axle during the night, and this enabled the transport to continue.

But meanwhile the crane could not wait any more in Pietarsaari, and the transport had to be redirected to Yxpila in Kokkola, 40 km away.

The Ramm-Schmidt family had a sleepless night, but in the morning their yacht bobbed into the water. TARANTELLA was not ready, during the sea trip to Pietarsaari there were people on board busily installing missing fittings. “On the dock a band was playing, and some people had gathered to follow the event” remembers the owner. “Finally we poured a bottle of champagne over the bow and all important fittings.”

At 4 p.m. there were fanfares intended to celebrate the departure. “Our things were not on board, but the music did not stop” laughed the old man. So they cast off in a strong westerly and soon learned that some fittings were attached with too short fasteners. The maiden voyage from Pietarsaari to Helsinki he describes as “dramatic”. “First the main boom came off the mast, then the expensive anemometer at the mast top came loose, and even a genoa sheet track worked loose from the deck.” The yacht was fast, and in spite of all trouble she made the 400 miles to Helsinki in four days.

During two years the yacht participated in many regattas, and the family cruised around the Baltic Sea shores. "Cruising was a must" explained the old man the pressure from wife and children. Also Rod Stephens was on board occasionally to exchange information and ideas. With his assistance the yard got the teething troubles under control. "The coordination with the designers in New York was done over the phone" remembers Pekka Koskenkylä. "The call had to be ordered in the morning for getting it mid-day. The connection was often bad, and made it difficult to communicate." Eventually the Stephens brothers got convinced about the build quality of the first Swan model, and agreed to design new models exclusively for Nautor.

When Ramm-Schmidt brought his yacht to the yard for winter storage the third time, Koskenkylä made a generous proposal – "Trade in your Swan 36 and get a Swan 37 instead". This was the fourth model for the new yard. TARANTELLA was traded in. Swan 37 TARANTELLA II is still, after 47 years owned by the same family.

When the first TARANTELLA was put on the market 34 years later, Nautor used the opportunity, and bought her back. On the 17th December 2003 a truck brought her from the Swedish Orust island back to the yard. After a light refit she was used as a historical showpiece for the brand.

The winter before, in sight of the 50 year anniversary, a decision was made to make TARANTELLA shine again. Five boatbuilders originally participating in her building, amongst them 78-year Jan-Erik Nyfelt - the very first Nautor employee – although retired since many years, came together once a week and worked on improving her cosmetics. The same guys also in person sailed "their" yacht at the Anniversary Regattas in Turku and Sardinia.



Design 50 years ago: Spinnaker instead of gennaker, raked stem instead of vertical, and a high coachroof instead of more freeboard.

And the yacht starting all this, what does she look like? The first impression is exactly as shown in the old brochure – classic lines, with a lot of sheer towards the bow. It is interesting to look at the details showing the technical level at the time of the build. The deck still shows the diamond pattern non-slip, which was later used on many yachts. The areas around the turning blocks and attachment eyes of bronze are smooth, these areas were defined on the drawing board and then implemented in the deck mould. The 120 cm long genoa sheet tracks are recessed into the deck.

The S&S design office became world famous through their competitive racing yachts. For the details they relied on experience and evolution. TARANTELLA's rounded pulpit, two Dorade boxes, and main sheet traveler arrangement are parts of the portfolio that the Stephens brothers developed, and continuously refined in practical use. Most S&S designs have these features.

The wooden toe rails have integrated bronze hawse holes for the mooring lines. There is no anchor locker, the Danforth anchor was stowed below deck. A Proctor aluminium mast was installed two years after delivery, and replaced the original wooden mast.



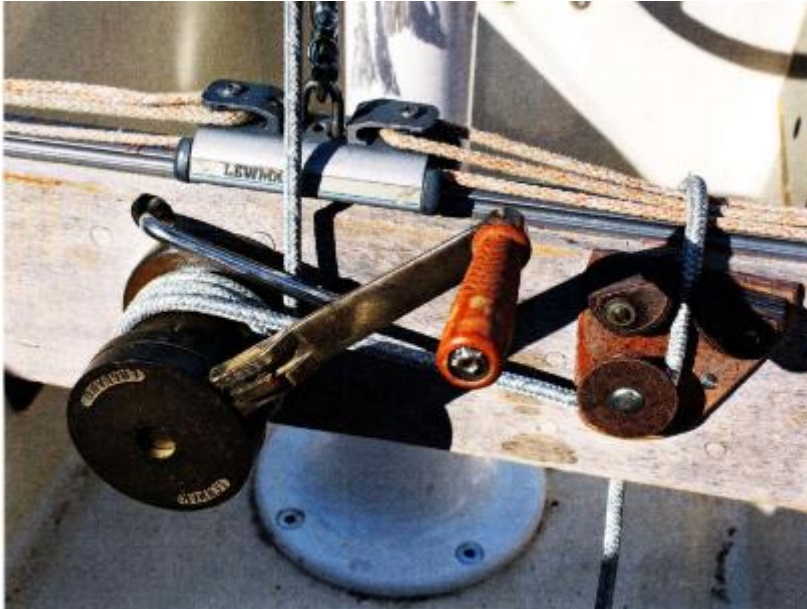
Improvement during refit: Hidden under the wooden frame is a watertight aluminium hatch.

Cowls on substantial wooden boxes take care of providing fresh air to the fo'c'sle and saloon. Moist interiors were a horror for the Stephens brothers, and they developed this solution back in the 1930's. A wooden frame conceals the aluminium hatch, later installed forward on the coachroof. Grabrails provide security.



Angularity: Tiny wheel in small cockpit. The sharp corners and ergonomics originate from boatbuilding in wood.

The cockpit is very angular, bridge deck and seats are on the same level. The seats stay dry due to gratings, with stowage lockers below. The cockpit floor grating the renovators did not manage to finish in time. The wooden cold-moulded cockpit coamings are reinforced for the genoa sheet cleats. There is a substantial wooden beam for the main sheet track, also providing a place for the bronze main sheet winch. The winch mechanism has stood 50 years of use, the handle is inserted from the side into the top of the drum, and locks securely in place with a spring. Fairleads and clutches, as well as most blocks are of phenolic laminate.



Solid: The original winch, and phenolic clamcleats and leadblock still perform their job.

Also the steering pedestal is original, with a cast aluminium 6-spoke wheel from Edson. The tiny wheel is covered with white lacing. "Can she be kept on course with this small wheel?" I ask Jan-Erik Nyfelt. He laughs, winks at me and takes a bearing over the bow with one hand. "Very easily and always in a straight line" explains the man with the black cap.

Four winches for the genoa and spinnaker sheets stand on stainless pods outside the coamings. Since 2003 four Lewmar bronze self-tailers assist the crew. Such winches were not available in 1967. At the time there were five chromed Barlows on board: "Designed by yachtsmen for yachtsmen". Sheets and halyards remained on their own winch, and the tails were secured on wooden cleats.

The route from the cockpit into the saloon goes via the bridge deck and then four steps down. Koskenkylä engaged Olle Enderlein from Sweden for the interior concept, Enderlein had an excellent reputation in this area. The interior should be family and leisure friendly, and appeal particularly to women. "This was extremely important for our sales success", is still the firm opinion of Pekka Koskenkylä.



Opposite galley: Settees together with a table that can be lowered to transform into a double berth.

In the saloon sparse light is provided by three narrow portholes each side. The optimum use of space is achieved with a dinette arrangement including a table and a three-winged settee. The saloon table is supported by an aluminium leg, apparently from a camping equipment outlet. The table can easily be lowered to seat level, and a double bed created. The engine, a 15 HP Volvo Penta MD2, is located in the deep bilge below the aft settee wing. The yacht press at the time praised the extremely roomy interior.

It should be noted that TARANTELLA has 6 berths, but there is also another interior version with two pilot berths in the saloon, providing 7 berths, with the galley aft to SB. Compared to current layouts the arrangement seems downright cozy.

Above the longitudinal settee there is a book shelf with a solid wooden surround. Behind the shelf the white topside is visible. Here as well as on the sloping bottom areas the structure of heavy woven rovings shows up on the surfaces. The floorboards are thin and without holly stripes, looking rather gloomy. The interior is solid and built for long trips. The long handrails along the overhead are evidence of this.

On the underside of the side decks the fastener bolt ends with nuts are fully visible. The cabin overhead is finished in vinyl with a gentle marble surface. The insides of the coachroof coamings have a wooden finish.

The interior conforms to the taste of the time – brass and bronze on mahogany. The main bulkhead displays clock, inclinometer, and barometer. The 6" ship's bell included in the original specification is missing though.

The working surfaces in the galley SB side are high up and provide space for drawers and lockers underneath. The crockery disappears behind sliding doors under the side deck. Fine detail work in the drawer for slicing bread, with crumb collection and a nice grating.



Detail work: a galley drawer is laid out for slicing bread. The crumbs collect under the grating.

A door leads from the galley to the head, basically a 1 m wide passage across the hull. To P an oilskin locker, in the middle the toilet, of course a Baby Blake, a sanitary monster with chromed fittings. The bowl displays the maxim "PLEASE FLUSH WELL". The GRP-washbasin to SB represents the charm of a bathroom from the 1960's. Below the basin is the obligatory foot pump for the water.



Hybrid: The yard provided extensive woodwork in the interior, for avoiding the impression of plastics.

The fo'c'sle is separated with a sliding door, of rather thin plywood, but framed with solid edge pieces like the other panels. The fore cabin has two berths and sail stowage in the triangular fore peak.



Partitioned: Single berths in the fo'c'sle with the possibility to rig lee cloths, located immediately forward of the head.

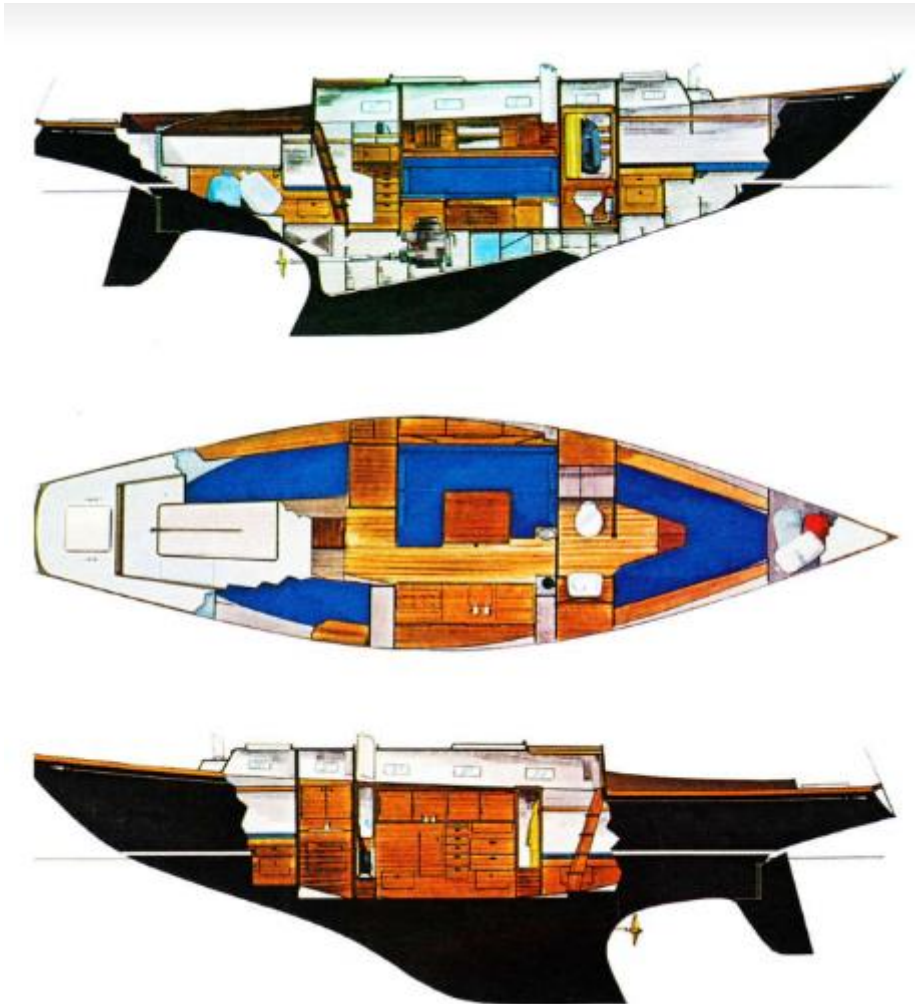
The navigation area at the entrance offers space for old large size charts. The electrical panel is neat. At the chart table there is only a VHF with a black handset of bakelite. Four displays for wind and log are located on the garage over the sliding hatch. Once they were the "state of the art", and accordingly expensive.



Reinforced: Partial bulkheads and pillars stiffens the hull built of GRP, then a new material.

The pronounced sheer and low freeboard is remarkably beautiful. In spite of the low freeboard TARANTELLA sails very dry. On the wind she heels over, a wave through appears amidships, and she soon approaches her hull speed. At the cockpit the freeboard decreases to a few centimetres. The steering wheel is tiny. In the narrow cockpit the helmsman can hold on to the rail with one hand while easily steering with the other.

The coloured drawings below show the Enderlein interior with the long galley. Rod Stephens disliked this galley, he preferred pilot berths each side instead, with the galley aft to SB. There are many 36's with Rod's preferred arrangement.



TECHNISCHE DATEN

Konstrukteur	S & S
Produktionszeit	1967-1970
Rumpflänge	10,91 m
Breite	2,94 m
Tiefgang	1,90 m
Gewicht	7,0 t
Ballast/-anteil	3,6 t / 51,4 %
Großsegel	21,3 m ²
Genua (150 %)	42,0 m ²
Spinnaker	101 m ²
Maschine ..	Volvo P., 15 PS/11 kW

MERKMALE

Der Lateralplan ist zwar geteilt, erinnert aber noch an die Zeiten des Langkiels. Das Ruder ist von einem Skeg geführt. Der Decksprung ist prägnant, ebenso der lange schräge Löffelbug und das kleine Heck, das jedoch schon negativ gestaltet ist. Die Maschine steht tief unten in der Bilge.

Special features: The rudder is separate from the keel, but there are features from the long-keeled times. The rudder is supported by a skeg. The sheer is eye-catching, as well as the sloping stem, and the small transom, already with negative slope. The engine is deep in the bilge.

Due to the heavy keel and narrow beam, TARANTELLA has a very high IMS capsizing angle, 145 degrees, and the stability curve positive/negative area ratio is 29, this is about ten times the ratios used for today's yachts. This makes her a very safe offshore yacht. The small cockpit is also a safety feature, collects less water if filled. A sistership has sailed around the world mostly single handed.

TARANTELLA is now an icon. As the first yacht from the Nautor yard she creates identity and connects the owners of 36- to 131-footers. During the Parade of Sail in Turku thousands of spectators waved to her. A small yacht with five old gentlemen in striped pullovers and black caps.



The renovators: They have restored TARANTELLA. Five very relaxed boatbuilders displayed their ancient Swan at the Turku anniversary regatta in August 2016. Left to right: Peter Grankulla, Ralf Brännbacka, Gösta Brännbacka, Jan-Erik Nyfelt - the first Nautor employee 1966, and Christer Strömberg.

Translation from German by Lars Ström. The author of the original text is Klaus Andrews, and as a special favour for ClassicSwan he kindly supplied his full text for translation. He also took the photos.

A shortened version is published in YACHT 13/2017.