

Illustrations by Henry Hill



Mason 43: A Voyaging Workhorse

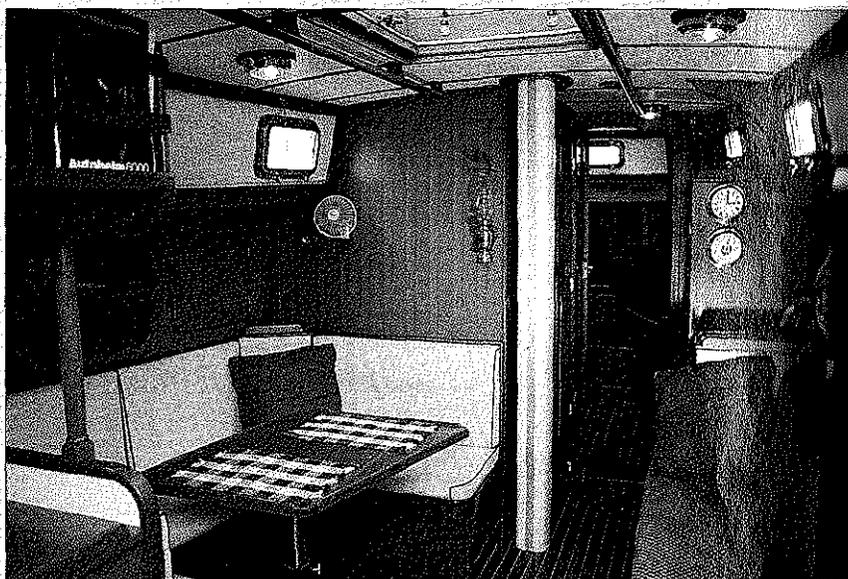
by Joe Minick

When Lee and I set out to find a long-distance cruising boat we had several requirements. We wanted a boat that could carry us and most of our worldly goods for an extended cruise of several years. This meant a heavily constructed boat with good volume and load-carrying ability, a boat able to stay out there and take some punishment. A sail plan that could be handled in all situations by a shorthanded crew was essential. Moderate displacement and a seakindly motion were high on our list, and tankage for an extended voyage was a must. With our preference for an aft-cockpit design, we were drawn, to the Mason 43.

One of a long line of boats from Al Mason's drawing board, the Mason 43 was introduced in 1978 by Pacific Asian Enterprises (PAE). Built in Taiwan at the Ta Shing yard, it reputedly evolved from the successful CCA ocean racer *Sitzmark*. A full keel with cutaway forefoot is a hallmark of this traditional design. The rudder is attached to the trailing edge of the keel and incorporates an aperture for the standard three-blade prop. The bottom of the keel is wide, flat and straight, giving good support when drying out at a seawall for bottom work in remote areas, but no doubt at the expense of some small amount of windward performance.

Topside, the first feature you'll notice is the teak deck. While nothing is as aesthetically pleasing or as effective a non-skid surface, teak decidedly is a maintenance commitment. After extensive research, including discussions with Mason 43 owners, we committed ourselves to teak decks and haven't been disappointed. The teak on our 12-year-old deck is still close to 5/8" thick. To date, no Mason 43 has been reported to suffer from any problems as the result of having a teak deck installed, although several owners have replaced a large number of plugs along the way, and recaulking down the road is inevitable.

Really fine construction features include



Sturdy construction, fine finish and practical layout are trademarks of the Mason 43. The saloon's pragmatic settee and dinette are typical, providing good seats and sea berths both during passages and in port.

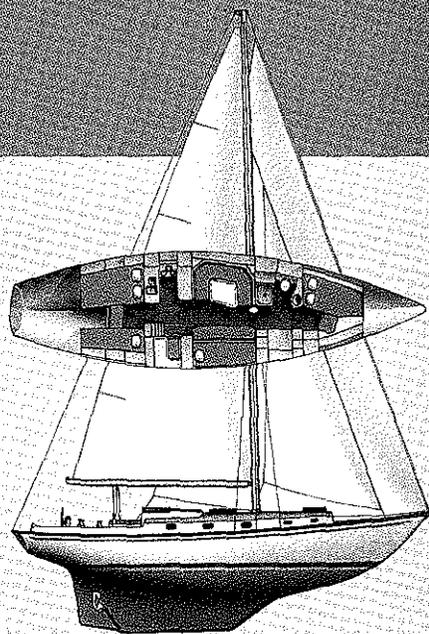
full-length longitudinal stringers glassed into the hull. The hull is laid up with an internal copper SSB antenna ground around the waterline and includes an external copper grounding plate on the starboard side. A bridgedeck protects the offset companionway, and the aft-cabin is ventilated with 14 opening ports, five large Dorade vents and four opening hatches. The aft cabin layout moves the companionway forward, making it more difficult to install a dodger, but there are several successful approaches to solving the problem. Heavily built is the buzzword.

Belowdeck, the aft-cabin/aft-cockpit design produces a respectable owner's area in the stern with a double and single berth plus an abundance of storage, including a large hanging locker. A folding sink in the aft cabin is another nice touch. At the base of the entry ladder to starboard is a protected, functional nav station. A U-shaped galley is opposite to port, with large double

sinks aft and a refrigerator/freezer under the counter of the pass-through that divides the dinette from the galley. The dinette opposes a settee amidship, led by the head and V-berth forward. Head design is excellent, with a separate shower stall and lots of elbowroom.

The standard engine is the Perkins 4-108 installed below the cabin sole over a deep bilge sump. This is about the minimum size for a boat with this displacement; several have been replaced with larger engines. If installed, the gen-set sits just ahead of the engine; otherwise the batteries occupy this space. Access to the engine and gen-set is a bit tedious, but it is workable, and the engine's location maximizes cabin volume while allowing the prop shaft to be aligned parallel with the waterline for best efficiency.

The Mason 43 is powered by 899 square feet of sail divided between the three sails of the double-spreader cutter rig. The



Mason 43

moderate-aspect-ratio mainsail provides good drive off the wind without the need for jibs that are too large for two to handle. The staysail stay is backed up with running backstays and held to a heavily reinforced deck by a quick-release fitting. Dual bow rollers are heavily constructed.

Mason 43

LOA	43'11" (13.4 m.)
LWL	31'3" (9.5 m.)
Beam	12'4" (3.8 m.)
Draft	6'3" (1.9 m.)
Ballast	8,400 lbs. (3,810 kgs.)
Disp	23,960 lbs. (10,868 kgs.)
Sail area	899 sq.ft. (83.5 sq.m.)
Ballast/Disp	.35
Disp/Length	350
SA/Disp	17.3
Fuel	130 gal. (492 ltr.)
Water	205 gal. (776 ltr.)
Holding	retro
Auxiliary	Perkins 4-108
Designer	Al Mason

The divided chain locker is deep enough to accommodate both a nylon and a chain rode easily.

Storage is good, with four hanging lockers, including a wet locker at the bottom of the companionway stairs. Tankage for 205 gallons in five stainless tanks and 130

of fuel in two steel tanks is standard.

Underway, the helm is a little heavier than we were used to on our previous boat, which sported a balanced spade rudder, but tracking is excellent. The 43 can be steered by most windvanes or autopilots. Sailing performance is good for a vessel with this kind of volume and displacement. Most owners cite routine 150- to 160-mile days. Replacing the existing prop with a feathering version improved performance significantly on our boat.

The Mason 43 is a proven passagemaker with lots of ocean miles to back up this claim. In a blow she heaves to well under staysail and reefed main, lying surprisingly close to the wind. Over 100 were built, including 10 with ketch rigs, before the model was replaced by the Mason 44. Selling between \$115,000 and \$185,000, the Mason 43 represents one of the better buys in long-distance cruising boats.

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