

A LOOK BACK AT





**THE RAJ 31,
MARITIMER 9.6,
AND THE
BLACKFIN 32**

**THEY'RE ALL IN
THE FAMILY**

By Charles Jannace



In the beginning, 1977 to be exact, I created RAJ Yachts, Inc. on a very small budget. Without proper funding, the company only lasted about one year. But I must have done a darn good job, because the boat is still in some sort of production 31 years later.

Back in 1973 or 1974, I attempted to develop a program to build 65-foot motor yachts in El Salvador, Central America to take advantage of the VERY low labor rates in that country. Although the labor rates were low, so were the skill rates. Toss in some gunfire, and arson and we began to believe we had made a mis-

take coming to this country. After a visit from three gentlemen with machine guns, who informed us that only Communists can teach workmen, we realized we had made a mistake and left the country on the next plane, while we still could. The flight was to Panama, so we went to Panama, and then to Honduras, and then to Miami. We had to bounce three nuns off the plane to get us the seats, but I figured the guys with machine guns were not after them. I was wrong.

In 1976, my partners in the Salvadorian venture, Irv Resnick and Sheldon Bernstein, decided to try

again with a 31-foot fly bridge sport-fisherman here in the good ole U.S.A—a little less gunfire, and a little less arson. We started RAJ Yachts in Hollywood, Florida. RAJ means Resnick And Jannace. Sheldon didn't want his name on a boat company in South Florida.

My so-called business plan was to create a boat that would capture 10 percent of the Bertram 31's sales. We figured if we could sell one boat per large Florida city per year, we could make a good profit. Eventually, as the Blackfin 32, she knocked the Bertram 31 right out of the marketplace.

I designed a true 31-foot LOA (the

Bertram 31 may be somewhat shorter than 31) engine boxes, deep-vee hull, 11-foot, 8-inch beam (hull out of the mold), with lots of flare, and a huge flying bridge. I tried to correct some of Bertram's shortcomings, such as a hard, wet ride, very small flying bridge. She was to have 22 degrees of deadrise at the transom, but the boat-builder, Pete Snider, and I may have had a wee bit too much St. Pauli's Girl beer for lunch one day, and she came out with 21 degrees. But she still ran beautifully.

There are two ways to design a new boat; the first way is to decide what you want to put into the boat, and then fit a hull around it. This is what you do if you want to sell the boat to Americans. The second way is to design the best hull for the sea conditions, then put into it what fits. This is the way I built the boat.

Pete built the hull plug, while I built the deck/deckhouse/flying bridge plug. The superstructure was unusual in that it was all one piece. The house and bridge were NOT add-ons. The hull plug was actually a boat. This was my idea, and I was wrong!

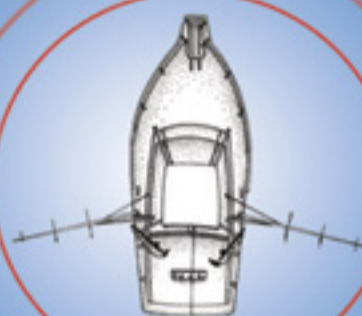
The eyebrow was a donut, and was glued on to the housetop. The control console was an island, and sat on the aft end of the fly bridge, with three seats forward, and three seats aft of it. Sheldon was annoyed at the RAJ's fly bridge, because it had more room than the bridge on his Bertram 46. Access to the bridge was by two ladders on top of the engine boxes. Two ladders help with traffic control when you have those panic parties involving screaming, and running up and down the ladders.

The first RAJ 31 was an all

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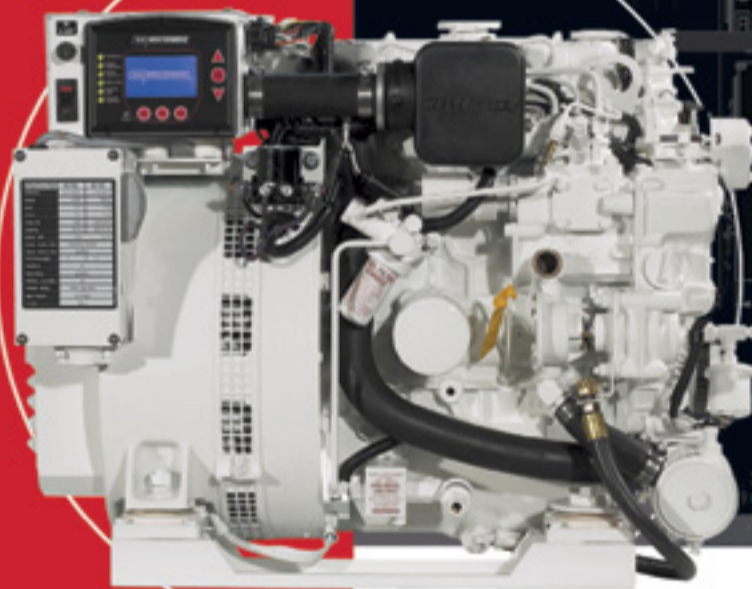
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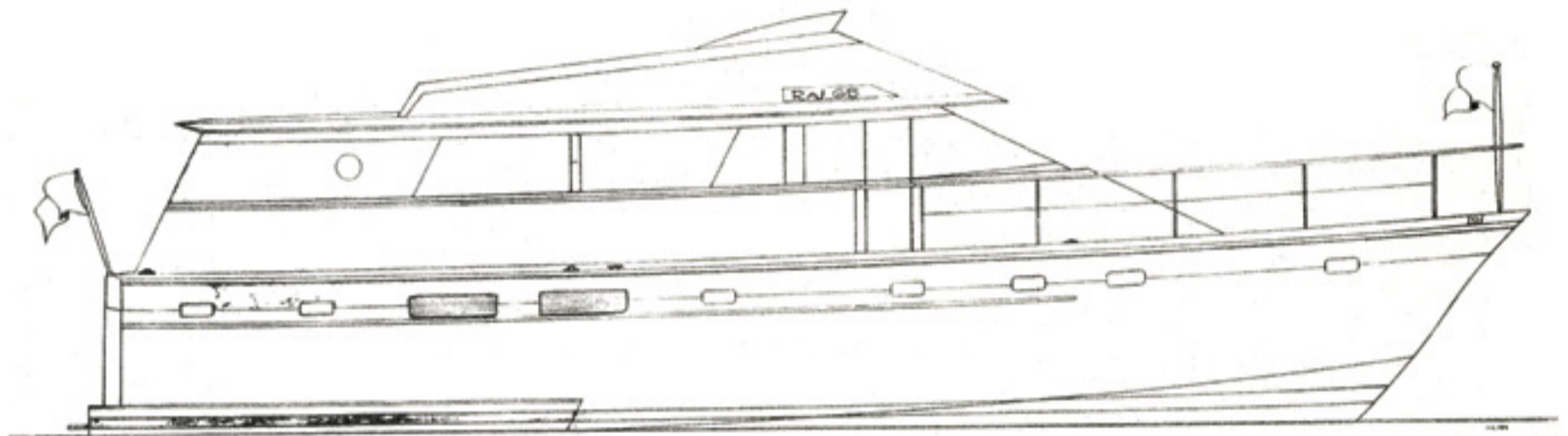
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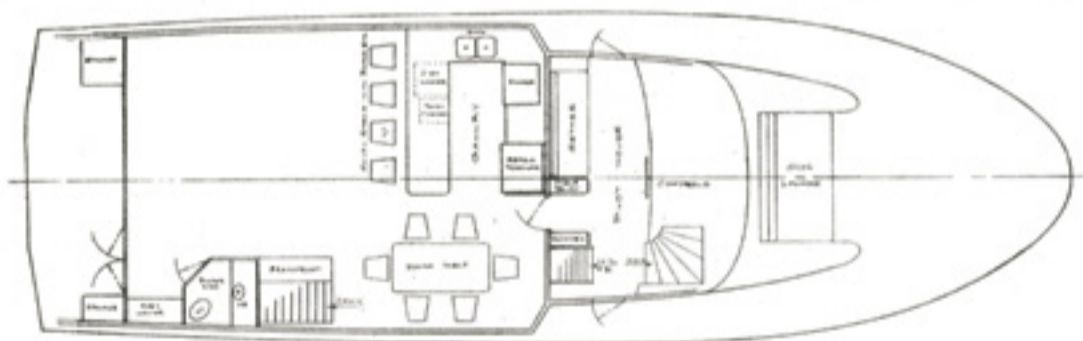
Production of the RAJ 65 in El Salvador was shut down by machine gun fire and arson. It was a good time for Charles to head for home.

FRP/Airex composite boat. There was NO structural wood in the boat. The only wood was in the joiner work and had nothing to do with the structure. The hull was a monocoque structure in which the skin absorbs most of the stress the body is subjected to. There were no longitudinals. There were transverse bulkheads

made of Airex and FRP, but you needed those to divide up the spaces, anyway. The engine bearers and the fuel tank were a one-piece molding, glued into the bottom of the hull. The struts were of aluminum, and were mounted in small centerboard trunks, and cross-bolted, after alignment. There were no strut palms. The

raw water intakes were sea chests and there were no sea cocks. The number two boat had FRP rudders.

The boat was designed for six-cylinder Barr/Ford conversions of 160 HP; however, the first boat had six-cylinder 210 Renault's, which actually made approximately 175 HP. We put the Frog engines in because



The interior layout of the illfated RAJ 65



65'-0" x 20'-5" x 20'-0" x 5'-5"

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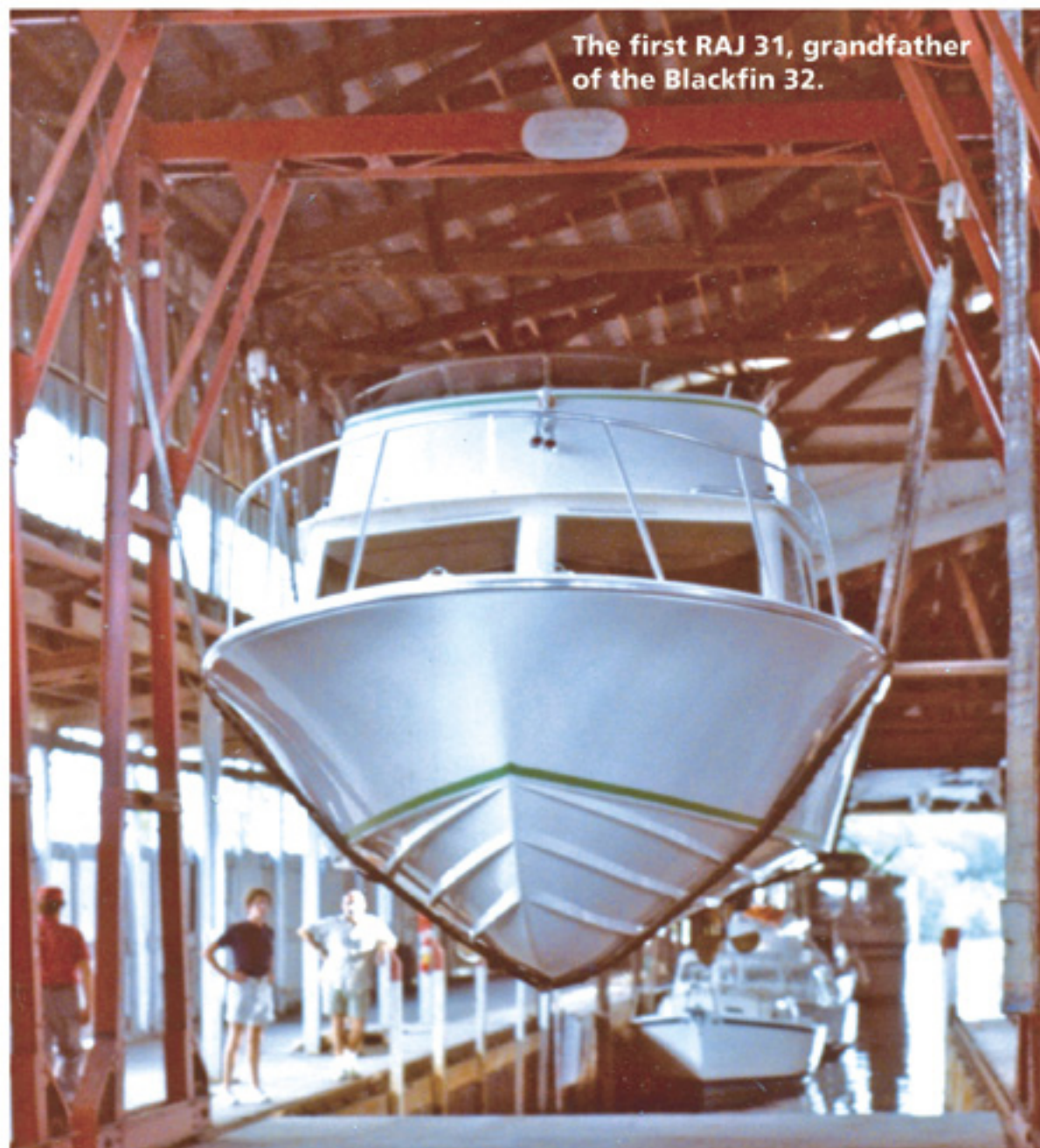
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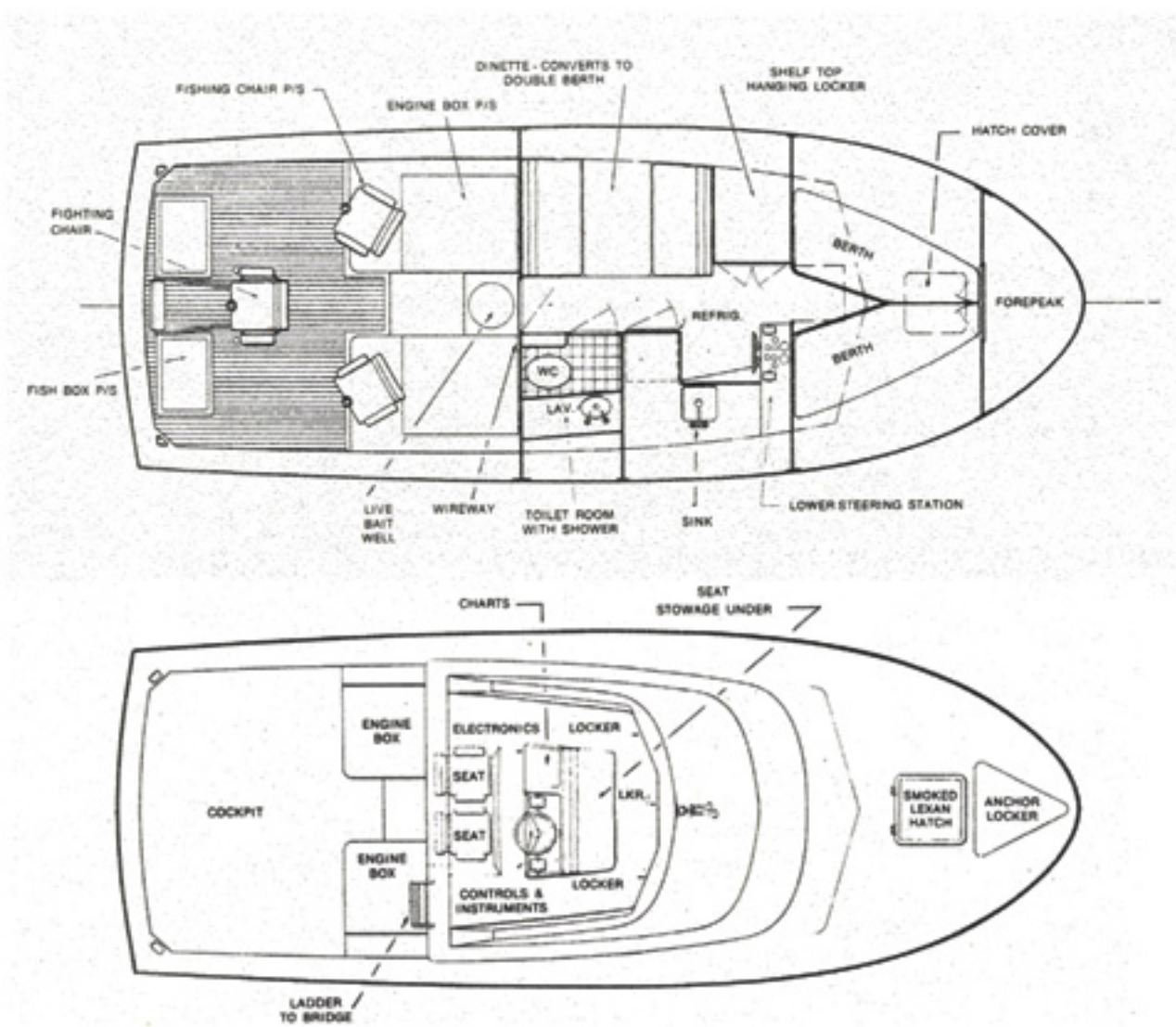


The first RAJ 31, grandfather of the Blackfin 32.

they were free for a while. The first boat displaced approximately 12,000 pounds, and topped off at 28 knots, which wasn't great, but wasn't too bad, either. I had promised my partners 30 knots, but they had made some promises, too, so all of us had promise issues.

The second boat had Caterpillar 3160s, which were turbocharged by a dealer in Fort Lauderdale, and made more than the stock 197 HP. We think they made 250 HP. The boat was heavier, of course, but still went 31 knots, which was not too shabby. I think the third boat had a molded FRP interior, which was heavier, and uglier, but cost less to build.

The original design did not provide for a generator, or air conditioning, as 30 years ago, serious fishermen really didn't need them. A little sweating was good for you, and hot weather could be handled by ingesting lots of cold beer, or so my doctor tells me.



Interior layout and flybridge plans were identical to the first 32 Blackfins.

When the generator/AC was added, sea cocks, mufflers, batteries, etc., had to be added, and the boat started getting too heavy for the hull.

At this point we ran out of money. The company was sold to MARITIMER, who called the boat the Maritimer 9.6. Most of the boats were Airex cored, but some had Klegecell cores. About seven boats were built by Maritimer.

Maritimer had some sort of money problems, and the molds were sold to Blackfin. The rear house side window, and the fashion post were changed, and the Airex core was deleted, and the boat was called the Blackfin 32. All the cute little features, such as the molded, integral tank/engine bearers, sea chests, strut trunks, composite hull/deck/superstructure, were deleted. The final Blackfin 32's were 10,000 pounds heavier than the RAJ 31. The molded interior was part of the weight problem. The thickness of the parts was determined by the size of the sledge hammers and 2X4 wedges used to separate the parts from the molds.

The Blackfin's had solid skin hulls, with plywood structural members. The superstructures had a rudimentary coring system, which only contributed to weight, not strength. Most of the Blackfin 32's had generators and AC, and three fuel tanks. The extra tanks gave shorter range, and lower speed, but were more macho. The Blackfin 33 was a Blackfin 32, with the transom angle changed, so she has a shorter bottom than the 32. A lot of styling changes were made to the 33, some good, some not so good. She was made to look more like the 29, rather than the original RAJ 31/Maritimer 9.6/BlackFin 32. The

original RAJ 31 had a bit of a Hunt patrol boat look about her.

A modern version of the Blackfin 29 fly bridge is under construction in Cape Coral, Florida. I call her "A Better Blackfin 29". She is 29 feet LOA, but has the same beam as the 32; 11 feet. 8 inches from the mold. In effect, she is a squashed 32 FB. The bottom configuration is the same as the Blackfin 29, which is the same as the 31/32. The original Blackfin 29 was made by taking a Blackfin 32 hull, and cutting it off to 29 feet, 2 inches, and narrowing the beam above the chine to 10 feet, 5 inches. The bow freeboard is the same as the 32. The new 29 will be ALL Airex/FRP composite construction, with a custom wooden interior. NO ROT. Engine choice is wide open, but as she will be light, she won't need great big, heavy, thirsty, engines. She can also be built as a single-engined boat, which might be faster than the twin-engined boat. She has tumblehome in the transom, which is the latest fashion, but is really a throw-back to the 20's and 30's. Retro boats are the latest fashion.

A modern version of the Blackfin 32 fly bride is in the planning stage. "Planning Stage" means that we don't have the money to start tooling. She will be beamier, and have a little more freeboard. The bottom will be the same. As she will be composite construction, she will be lighter, and can use smaller engines, even though smaller engines don't sell as well as larger engines—that macho thing again.

I hope that this explains a little about the RAJ, Maritimer, Blackfin history. 🐟

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



CHARLES J. JANNACE

is one of history's great names in yacht design and marine architecture. He has been referred to as the "Father of the Blackfin," and has been a yacht design engineer since the early 1950s. Charles has 55 years of experience in marine design, building, and supervision of construction and tooling of boats for pleasure, commerce, and defense. He actually has built, with his own hands, plugs, molds and boats. One example is the RAJ/ MARITIMER/ BLACKFIN 31/ 32, building the plugs, molds, and the first two boats ever splashed.

The list of boats that have been influenced by Charles Jannace, including many that are still being built today is endless. The man is a legend in his field and he will continue to be as his yacht design ideas live on under many, many different names.

Charles current lives in Maryland with his wife Isabel still enjoying what he does best. He is currently involved in the design of the Jannace Yachts 430C Sportfish. A beautiful 43' sportfisherman that will be featured in our November/December 2008 BGFJ's "Just Splashed" Column. We hope you enjoy this walk down history lane.