HANSE 540e

A growing family chooses a home on the go

By Kimball Livingston

A dream. A boat. A common story—until you reach into the grab bag and pull out one dream, one boat, one family's story. Jean Ray Tippo's sailing dream always included living on a boat. It was true, he says, even while he and wife Jade lived in a tiny but charming California cottage far up Topanga Canyon above Malibu, the one that "felt like a vacation house."

Ditto the San Francisco years in another "felt-like-a-vacation-house" and the hours spent gazing at pictures of boats in magazines and whole weekends dedicated to hoofing the boat shows until Jade declared, Enough. Bode was a toddler, Lola was an infant, and mom just couldn't imagine moving her family onto one of these boats.

Fast forward to Lola as a three-year-old, Bode ready to begin school, and the day that Jade received an e-mail from Jean Ray with a picture of "our new home." Jade recalls, "I hadn't known he was still looking." But there was something appealing about the Hanse in the photograph that made the notion of a life aboard seem plausible. And with school commitments looming amid thoughts of relocating out of the city, better to take drastic actions en masse rather than in sequence. Jade explains, "Our honeymoon was a charter in the BVI, and our partnership is about helping each other realize our dreams. It seemed a bit much to make Jean Ray wait until the kids were off to college."

A few reality adjustments later, the 63-foot Hanse of the e-mail had morphed into the Hanse 540e *Mistral,* now berthed in Sausalito, on the north shore of San Francisco Bay. A storage unit swallowed all the household objects the boat could not, but the irony, says Jean Ray, "is that we never had this many bathrooms before."

Hanse Yachts produces easily handled, fashion-forward yachts with a distinctive personality. Company owner Michael Schmidt sailed and raced in his youth with Rolf Vrolijk, who went on to become the most visible half of Judel/Vrolijk & Co., the naval architects responsible since 1999 for shaping the Hanse line. In the role of in-house designers to Alinghi, as well as creators of grand-prix boats racing and winning worldwide, Judel/Vrolijk has unquestioned credentials when it comes to creating relatively light hulls with long waterlines, broad transoms, and proper sailing qualities. Add clean, open decks and you have echoes of Mediterranean megayachts, defying tradition at every hand. Belowdecks, the dark, narrow cabins of yesteryear receive not so much as a nod from this German builder, and *Mistral* is a house-replacement boat, so let's defy tradition ourselves and start there.

First impressions are lasting impressions. Everything about the 540e feels bigger than 54 feet. The main cabin feels wide, not linear, and, measured out, it ac-

PHOTO COURTESY OF NICO KRAUSS/HANSE

tually is wider than its length fore and aft. A 16-foot beam is quite the head start for interior design. Cabinetry is constructed to encourage the eye to take in the full, available reach of the hull, and the designers resisted the temptations of a deck-saloon design, which can result in a chopped-up interior. Bulkheads are white (the favored color, back when boats were built of wood), encouraging an airy sense of light. Add light-toned maple flooring squares and cream-colored upholstery, squint just a bit, and you could be in a trendy restaurant on the Sunset Strip. Think modern, hip, minimalist.

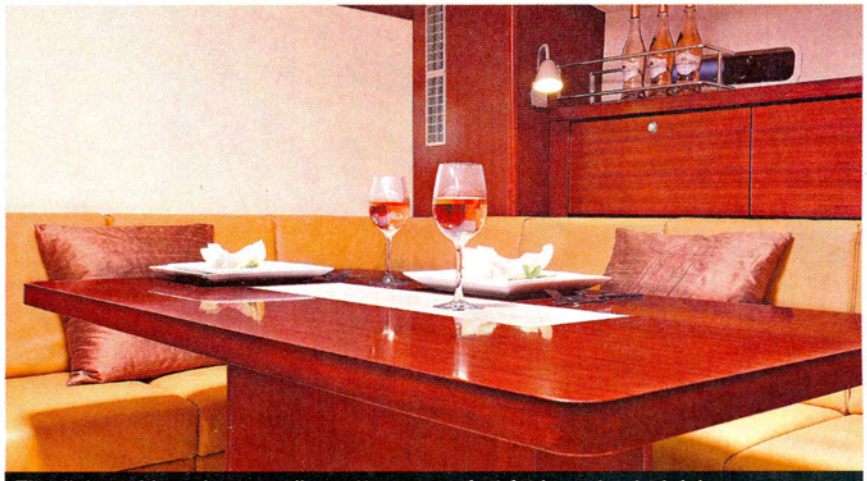
Tone a different Hanse down with other options—say, a teak-and-holly sole and darker upholstery—and it still won't be mistaken for your father's cruiser. Hanse's interiors are designed in-house, and a woman's touch is evident. The choices reflect an assumption that most buyers do not intend to reel off miles by the tens of thousands, will not cook regularly at sea, and prefer to entertain aboard with a touch of flair. The galley is stylish, and the black Corian countertops are fiddle-free. There are too few handgrips to satisfy nitpickers, the companionway ladder is surprisingly steep, and that, simply put, is the Hanse way; the stainless-steel companionway posts will be needed, and meanwhile they make a great "fire pole" for young Bode.

Jade's early assessment of the easy-wipe cream upholstery plus two kids: so far, so good. The Tippos have chosen a three-stateroom layout to give each child a private cabin and head. (Hanse offers optional layouts for each section of the boat.) At this age, for the kids, there is room to reallocate a portion of bed space to play space and toy storage, and house rules keep all toys belowdecks, where they cannot be lost overboard in a toy tragedy.

Space and storage are concerns on any boat, especially a liveaboard. In the main saloon the Tippos opted for a starboard-side bank of three individual seats together, sofa-style, each with a swing-out footrest and internal storage. One of those seats, for example, opens to reveal Bode's "shoe library." The more standard arrangement puts a table between the two seats.

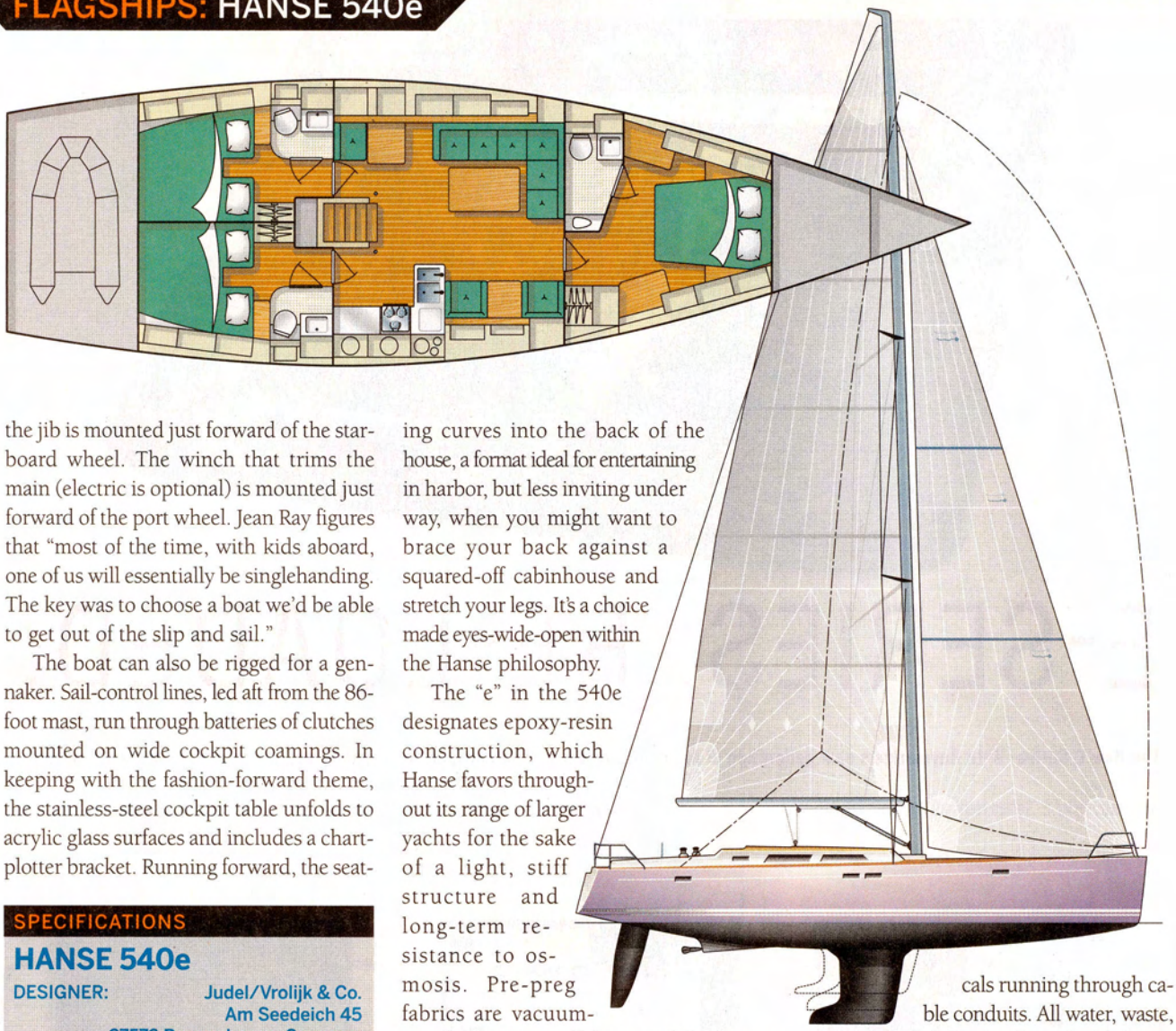
Stepping on deck, it is impossible not to think once again how the Hanse 540e, at every turn, looks and feels big for its length. Big enough for a skateboard park, but let's not give Bode any ideas. The key to short-handed sailing is the 95 percent self-tacking jib, trimmed by a Lewmar 54 electric winch that also hoists the main. It says much about the Hanse philosophy that a furling main is not an option. Hanses are meant to perform. Mid-boom sheeting keeps flying lines well clear of the cockpit, and all 1,668 square feet of working sail in jib and main can be trimmed from the helm, an important feature for the Tippos. The winch that hoists the main and trims

With stainless posts on either side of the companionway steps, the main saloon's contemporary styling attracts the young at heart



The dining table and surrounding settee are perfect for in-port entertaining

The spacious cockpit features dual wheel stations and easily reached winches and sail controls



the jib is mounted just forward of the starboard wheel. The winch that trims the main (electric is optional) is mounted just forward of the port wheel. Jean Ray figures that "most of the time, with kids aboard, one of us will essentially be singlehanding. The key was to choose a boat we'd be able to get out of the slip and sail."

The boat can also be rigged for a gennaker. Sail-control lines, led aft from the 86-foot mast, run through batteries of clutches mounted on wide cockpit coamings. In keeping with the fashion-forward theme, the stainless-steel cockpit table unfolds to acrylic glass surfaces and includes a chartplotter bracket. Running forward, the seating curves into the back of the house, a format ideal for entertaining in harbor, but less inviting under way, when you might want to brace your back against a squared-off cabinhouse and stretch your legs. It's a choice made eyes-wide-open within the Hanse philosophy.

The "e" in the 540e designates epoxy-resin construction, which Hanse favors throughout its range of larger yachts for the sake of a light, stiff structure and long-term resistance to osmosis. Pre-preg fabrics are vacuum-cured over Core-cell foam and then post-cured. The deck is a hand-laid sandwich. The intent is to provide a step-up product, at a price point.

Schmidt, when he went into the business of building boats, kicked off in 1993 by purchasing the tooling for the defunct Aphrodite 291 and reintroducing it as the Hanse 291—at a price point that commanded attention. That adventure shifted Schmidt's yard in Greifswald from boat repair to boat construction.

Boats have been built in Greifswald, in the former East Germany, since at least 1361, and the name, Hanse, associates the line with the Hanse cogs that carried goods for three centuries under the economic, political, and cultural security of the Hanseatic League. Michael Schmidt was thinking big, and he still does.

Well-designed systems include the Hanse's 12-volt and 110/230-volt electricals running through cable conduits. All water, waste, and diesel tanks are built of stainless steel. The 540e, with a composite iron/lead keel available in three different drafts, is powered by a 110-horsepower Yanmar and stainless-steel shaft turning the standard three-blade fixed propeller.

A stroll along the standard teak deck reveals thinking-neat features bow to stern. At the bow, the retractable anchor

Jean Ray, Jade, and their children Lola and Bode relax aboard their new home afloat

ILLUSTRATIONS BY KIM DOWNING; PHOTO COURTESY OF JEAN RAY TIPPO

SPECIFICATIONS

HANSE 540e

DESIGNER:	Judel/Vrolijk & Co. Am Seedeich 45 27572 Bremerhaven, Germany Tel. 011-494-71-97-123-95 www.judel-vrolijk.com
BUILDER:	Hanse Yachts Aktiengesellschaft Postfach 31 65 D-17461 Greifswald, Germany Tel. 011-493-834-5792-0 www.hanseyachts.com
U.S. AGENT:	Hanse Yachts U.S. 1 Chelsea Court Annapolis, MD 21403 Tel. 410-626-1493 www.hanseyachts.com
LOA	52'10"
LWL	47'11"
Beam	16'1"
Draft (standard/optional)	9'2"/8'or 6'5"
Displacement	41,226 lbs
Ballast	12,804 lbs
Sail area (100% foretriangle)	1,435 sq ft
Auxiliary	110-hp Yanmar diesel
Fuel	104 gal
Water	187 gal
Sail area-displacement ratio	19.3
Displacement-length ratio	167.3

Dual aft staterooms produce privacy along with lots of room and light (above); All three head areas have ample counter space and expansive storage areas (below)

davit stows in a self-draining chain locker, where the windlass lives out of sight, leaving the stem clean and clear. When needed, the anchor davit deploys easily, and the setup guides the chain out of and back into the locker along its natural pathway, without turns, promising ease of use. Just aft is a large storage locker accessed via a hatch and a ladder. All mooring cleats are collapsible (that clean-deck look), and the pair of flush hatches in the coachroof are trip-proof.

The transom? There's a secret here, a payoff that is rarely found in a production boat of any size. Separated by a watertight bulkhead and accessed by lowering the large, teak-surfaced swim step, is a garage, another megayacht echo, and it frees the cruiser from mounting a dinghy on deck. Jean Ray says, "I keep an 8½-foot dinghy inflated in the garage. When I get home from work it's great—and it's easy—to haul it out and goof around with the kids."

Kids who, when grown, will have quite the family hideaway to remember.