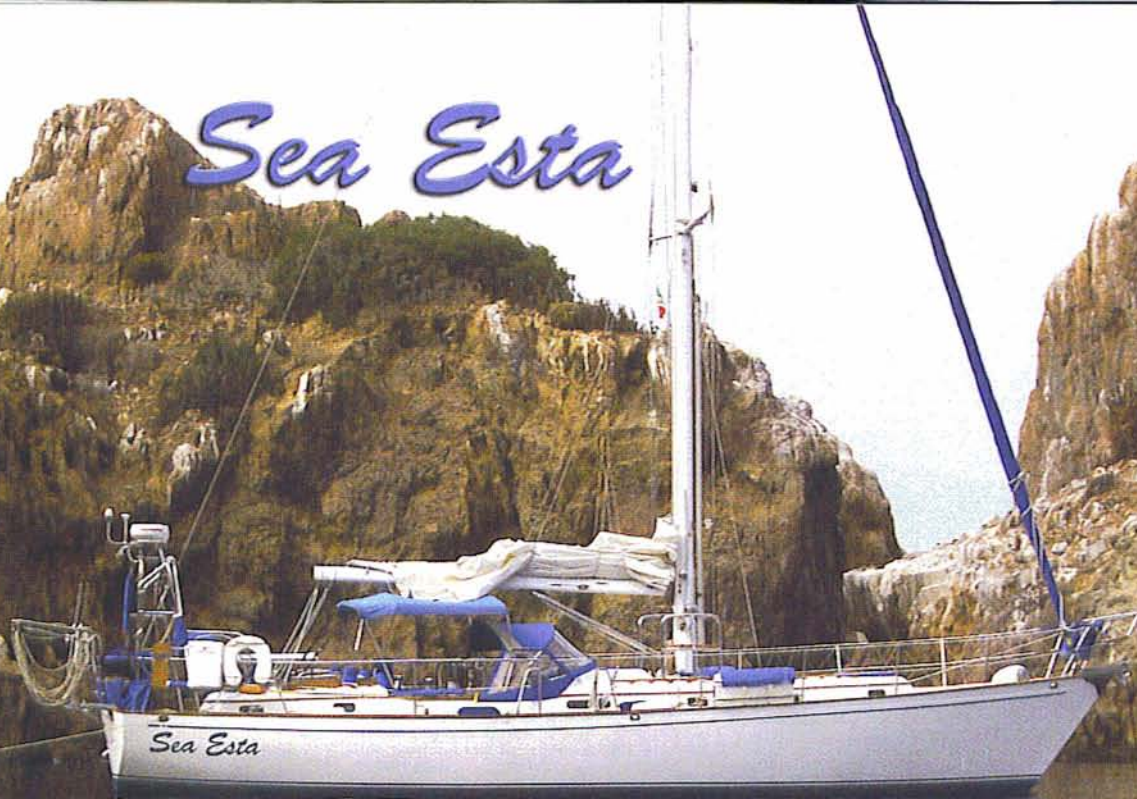


Sea Esta



A Peterson 44 Can Get You Where You're Going

By Zuzana Prochazka

I've sailed in the Caribbean and the South Pacific, as well as on both coasts of the United States and in each place I've seen at least one Peterson 44. The reason this design is so prolific may be because it was extremely forward thinking when it was new, nearly 30 years ago. It may also be because over 200 hulls were originally built and some were put in charter fleets in warm waters everywhere. But it is most likely because it has been an enduring and desirable design that gets constant praise from owners and has brokers in some areas taking waiting lists from anxious buyers. Since they are between 20 and 30 years old now, these boats can be found in a variety of conditions, but I think I've never seen one finer than *Sea Esta*, Bill and Gia's shining example of what a Peterson 44 can be even today.

Design, Construction and Performance

Stories circulate how Jack Kelly, one of the two success factors behind the Peterson 44, sought to build 10 boats, sell 9, and keep one for himself to go cruising. He teamed with relative newcomer, Doug Peterson, and a couple of hundred hulls later, had still not left on his cruise because he was too busy running a successful boatbuilding business. Kelly hired an American shipwright who moved to Taiwan, and supervised the construction there for seven years starting in 1976. The boats were then outfitted and commissioned in the United

States or wherever they were shipped. Kelly and Peterson were both from San Diego and many of the 44s sold on the West Coast. Today, the design is a classic.

The construction is a hand laid fiberglass that tapers from 3/4" in the keel and bilge area to 1/2" thickness above the waterline and 3/8" thickness at the deck. The hull/deck joint is a tongue and groove construction which is through-bolted and glassed over. The deck is a sandwich construction with marine plywood. One story goes that a boat went aground on a coral reef in the South Pacific and was then pulled across the reef – over 100 feet – and then sailed away. The term bulletproof comes to mind.

The boat was really the performance cruiser of its time with an underbody designed to move. The elongated fin keel holds encapsulated iron ballast and the largely cutaway forefoot reduces the wetted surface. The rudder is fully skeg hung and the propeller is completely protected as it is mounted between the skeg and the rudder. The 44 has a fine entry and a wineglass shaped transom. The ballast to displacement ratio of 33% states that the 44 is a light to moderate displacement boat that keeps upright in tough conditions. Theoretical hull speed is 8.3 knots and she will do that on just about any point of sail, given the right conditions. Not surprisingly, 180 nautical mile days are very attainable.

Cockpit, Deck & Rigging

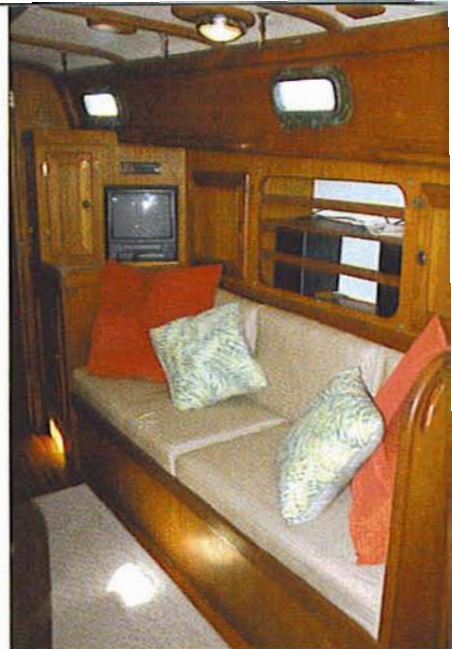
On deck, the Peterson 44 really shines. I've been aboard many of these boats and I'm always impressed with how easy it is to move around up top. The cockpit is large (6'6" x 7'6") and gets high marks for both visibility and sociability and the decks are clear and have safe bulwarks for good footing. Peterson offered teak decks as an option so boats today may have either teak or non-skid and *Sea Esta* has no teak to the relief of anyone who doesn't want the maintenance. The cabin top has a surprisingly low-profile which keeps the weight low and avoids the high, tiered cake look that some of the early center-cockpit boats succumbed to.

Sea Esta is ready for offshore work with mast pulpits, custom holders for extra jerry cans and a great arch on the back that incorporates a shower, a solar panel, seats, storage and a place to secure the outboard. On the pointy end, *Sea Esta's* bow roller has been built out to bring the dual anchors away from the hull and is truly one of the better examples of ground tackle organization I've seen on older boats.



The 44 carries a double spreader, keel stepped, cutter rig that points, is well balanced and lets the boat sail like a witch. It is also easily managed shorthanded in a blow with the staysail and slab reefing. The boats came standard with Lewmar #28 winches for primaries which Bill and Gia have upgraded to larger, self-tailing Harkens. The 44s also came standard with a manual windlass – which was an unusual luxury at the time – but *Sea Esta* has since been upgraded to a very large horizontal windlass arrangement.





Layout & Accommodations

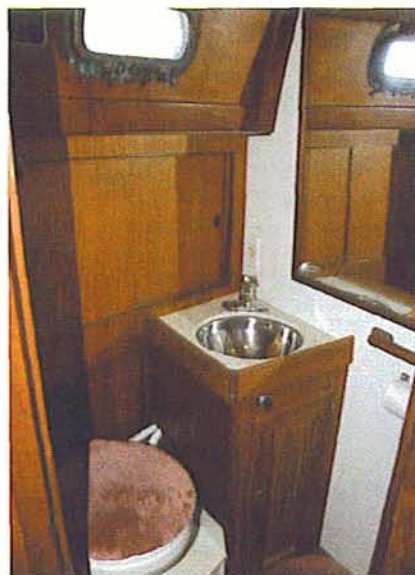
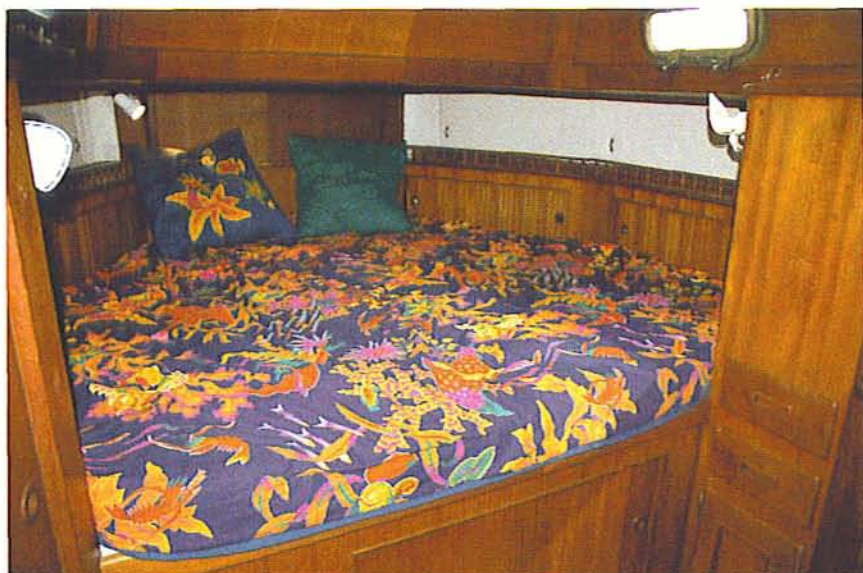
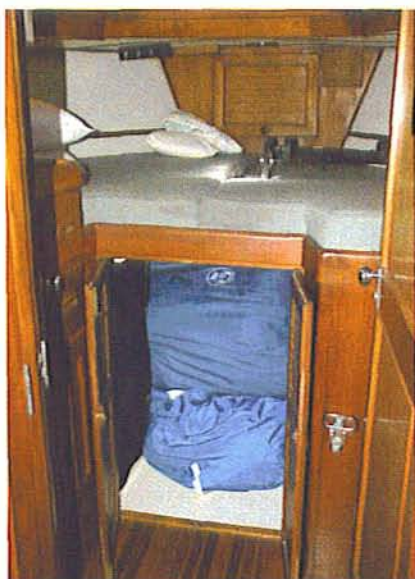
The Peterson 44 layout is very accommodating even by modern standards. Starting forward, there is a traditional vee berth which on *Sea Esta* was raised to build a large, lit sail locker below the berth. The saloon features a straight settee to starboard and on port is normally a true dinette with two bench seats and a dining table. However, *Sea Esta* has a more updated look with a U-shaped settee, a custom backlit wine locker and an inlaid backgammon board on the main table.

A U-shaped galley with upgraded Corian counters is to port with a stove and a double stainless steel sink close to the centerline. A large, forward facing nav station is to starboard, opposite the galley. The passageway to the aft cabin is directly behind the nav station on the starboard side and requires stooping to get through. The engine room is to port and the open space to starboard has been variously modified by many owners to include bunks, a generator, storage or a freezer.



The owner's cabin aft has a large bunk on the centerline. It is considered king size but is not an island berth. Due to the low overhang from the aft deck, some owners prefer to sleep head forward. To starboard is good hanging locker space and to port is the aft head and shower combination.





There are three hatches, three dorades and 10 opening, cast bronze ports to keep the air moving. The dorade over the galley on *Sea Esta* was replaced with a nice opening hatch to get the cooking heat and fumes out of the boat fast. The aft cabin also features a separate sliding hatch and companionway

with direct access to the cockpit. The interior is highlighted by a teak and holly sole and a teak finish that built the reputation of the Taiwanese craftsman of that time.

Systems & Mechanical

Sea Esta has a dedicated engine room which is located under the center cockpit sole and has quite a bit of room for additional systems. The tricky part is that the engine access is via the low passageway to the aft cabin. It can be dark and cramped down there when working on the main engine or the generator. The good news is that on some 44s, the cockpit seat above the passageway opens to allow light and air into the area – a real lifesaver when working on a hot engine in the tropics. The original engine on the Petersons was either a Perkins, a Westerbeke or a Lehman – all approximately 54-62HP. *Sea Esta* has a new 56 HP Yanmar and a 5kW Northern Lights generator, both of which look like you could eat a meal right off them. They both sit on stainless steel mounts that have been polished to a chrome-like finish.

The tanks have been an issue on these boats. Some owners have reported cracking and leaks in their stainless steel water tanks, but the real issue is the fuel tanks which are black iron and have had numerous problems. Many owners have replaced the fuel tanks entirely, but have had to cut the cabin sole apart to do so. One owner had the tank cut apart below the sole and had it taken out in pieces. Either way, be sure to understand the condition of the tanks and be prepared to spend some money on this part of the boat. *Sea Esta* upgraded the tanks and carries 147 gallons of fuel.

Wrap Up

When they were new, Peterson 44s sold for around \$90,000 for a base model. Twenty-five years later, prices range from 80-140K in today's dollars, depending on condition. Clearly, these boats have held their value, which is amazing for any depreciating asset, and really speaks to the boat's strengths. *Sea Esta* is an exceptionally refitted example of this classic cruiser which, even three decades later, is capable of sailing just about anywhere in comfort and style. It is rumored that *Sea Esta's* next trip may be to New Zealand by way of a slow jaunt through the South Pacific. Looks to me like she's ready. 🚤

Sea Esta

Designer:	Doug Peterson
Builder:	Yu Ching
LOA:	43' 10"
LWL:	38' 8"
Beam:	12' 11"
Draft:	6' 4"
Ballast:	10,000 lbs
Displacement:	30,000 lbs
Sail Area:	1011 sq ft
Fuel Tankage:	117 gallons
Water Tankage:	132 gallons