

38 Commander Design Ques

by Paul Pletcher

2001

As an architect by trade, I have long appreciated the fine classic designs that came out of the Chris Craft design studios. Chris Craft designers penned some of the finest lines ever to be transferred to wood, steel, aluminum, and fiberglass.

The 38' Chris Craft Commander is noteworthy, because it is not only the one model that pulled all of the very best in the past together into one super-model, the main section of the hulls were cast in three huge sections and bonded together. So the Commander became a leader in style as well as a milestone in state-of-the-art fiberglass manufacturing techniques.

In 1964 Chris Craft introduced the new 38' fiberglass Commander, much to the amazement of the boating public (and Chris Craft dealers). The design was kept a secret until the 1964 New York boat show.

One of the things I instantly liked about my 1966 Commander, was the interior was identical to my old wood 35' Sea Skiff, so when I moved up to the Commander, I felt right at home because the interior layout was so familiar. Take a look at the 35' Sea Skiff interior photo and see if you don't agree. This is just one of MANY examples of how Chris Craft borrowed from the best of the tried-and-true past, and incorporated it into the new.

The photos included here are the 1964 (and a few later ones too) Chris Craft models that were being sold along side the new Commander. Most of these boats were wood, some were lapstrake (plywood strakes) and a couple (Roamers) were aluminum or steel. You can see the "strong family resemblance" that was continued into the new Commander line. Bill Mackerer, Senior VP of Manufacturing and Engineering at Chris Craft, is responsible for the stunning new 38' Commander, built out of fiberglass. It was "Mac" Mackerer's last boat design before he retired, and many will say it is his finest.

The 38' Commander utilized Mac's many years of experience, and he took the very best proportions, features, styling cues, and tricks of the trade, and incorporated everything (and more!) into the new 38' Commander. The results proved to be a notable and enduring milestone in the world of pleasure boating.

These photos show what your Chris Craft alternatives would be during the time you would have also been able to buy a new fiberglass Commander off the same Chris Craft showroom floor (cost not being an issue, of course). While many of the wood siblings remain, few are still as "bullet-proof" as the 38' fiberglass Commander hull (designed to withstand 3x the stress of running full throttle in a six foot sea!).

In retrospect, and almost immediately, it was very apparant that Chris Craft had a real winner. All of the bow flair and proportions of cabin to hull, developed in previous models and tested on the water and in the showrooms, was retained on the Commander. As a result, the boat was instantly recognized as a Chris Craft, and it just "looked right". Upon looking further, the boat was found to be very special, indeed, and a design that has most certainly endured the test of time. No design fad here, just some of the most solid logic and style on the drawing boards that have been transferred into a pleasure boat. Once perfected in the 38, the same features were

incorporated into larger and smaller Commanders, all of which shared the design genius of Mr. Mackerer.

Paul Pletcher



31' Futura sleeps 6; single or twin V8's. 19' Golden Arrow has V8 power.

1964 31 Futura



35' double-cabin Yacht sleeps 6; twin V8's.

1964 35 Double Cabin



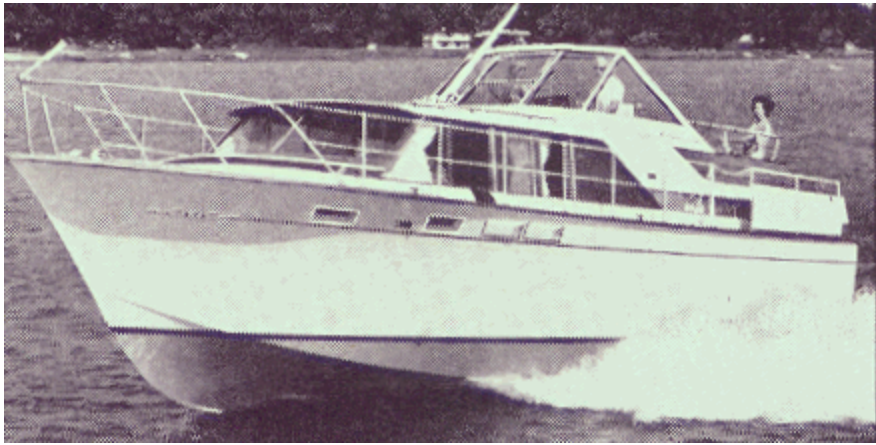
36' Challenger.

1964 36' Challenger

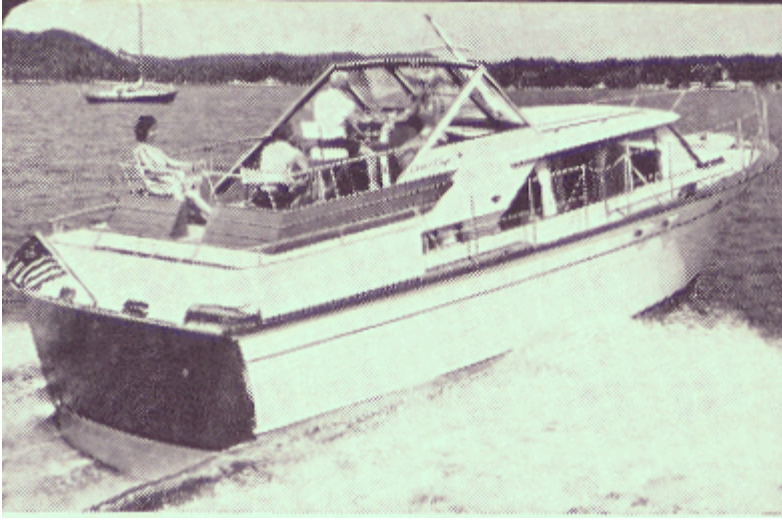


38' Challenger salon.

1964



1964 38' Challenger salon



1964 38 Challenger

This is Chris-Craft's new 38' Challenger Salon.



Try and match it for \$27,990.

How can you match a boat like this? It offers the comfort and privacy of three separate sleeping areas. It has a large, one-level main salon with an all-electric galley, lounge, and hi-lo table. The lounge and table convert to either a dinette or cozy sleeping accommodations for two. A large double stateroom aft has adjoining lavatory and shower. A private stateroom and another lavatory are forward. Sleeping capacity is six, and may be increased to eight by adding an extra lounge. There's plentiful storage everywhere. Chris-Craft quality and craftsmanship are evident in every corner. And all these are standard equipment: full carpeting, draperies, full headlining and

panelling, 10-cu.-ft. refrigerator, 3-burner electric range and oven, permanent shower, hot and cold water system, bilge blower, automatic bilge pump, helm seat, bow and side rails, folding top with side curtains, windshield wiper, and weather clothes! Twin 185-hp V8's with hydraulic transmissions are standard, and 210-hp V8's are also available. See your Chris-Craft dealer right away. And ask him about the two other Challenger models, a 30' cruiser priced at \$19,990 and a 36' Sedan priced at \$21,995. For literature write Chris-Craft Corporation, Pompano Beach, Florida. FOB prices and specifications subject to change.

Chris-Craft



38' Offshore (steel) sleeps 6; twin 280-hp V8 engines.

1964 Roamer



38' Sea Hawk with twin V8 engines. Command Bridge optional.

1964 38 Sea Hawk Command Bridge



1964 38 Sea Hawk



1965 35 Sea Skiff



CHRIS-CRAFT 37' CONSTELLATION

1965



1966 35 Sea Skiff Interior



1966 35 Sea Skiff



35' Corinthian Custom Cruiser sleeps 6; twin V8 options.