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DESIGN BECOMES PERSONAL

# Gregory C. Marshall

Gregory C. Marshall Naval Architect Ltd., based in Victoria on Canada's Pacific Northwest coast, capped a remarkable year 2008 by collecting an equally remarkable three World Yachts Awards in the "under 40m" category for the 112' aluminum expedition boat VvS1, built by New Zealand's Alloy Yachts. The yacht won for best design, best interior and for functionality. Designer Greg Marshall attributes this success in part to the vessel's design approach.

Story Bruce Maxwell

GCMNA's studio (above) is located in Victoria, Canada; Gord Galbraith (left) joined in 1998 the firm created by Gregory C. Marshall



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## Gregory C. Marshall

**“THIS IS THE FIRST TIME** we have designed a custom boat based on the personality of the client. It is an interesting concept, and in this case, it worked well. Owners have many individual preferences, of course, which shape their vessels, but I am talking about trying to imbue a motoryacht with the very essence of the people who will be aboard her,” Greg said, describing the process that led to the birth of *Vs1* built at Alloy Yachts. The yacht’s unusual name refers to a high grade of diamonds, and the hull’s exterior styling recalls a uniquely cut stone. “When I first saw her sailing in Waitemata Harbor in Auckland, the light reflected off her brilliantly, as the quality jewel on which she was modeled,” Greg said. *Vs1*’s owner, Michael Hill, is a prominent jewelry retailer in Australia and New Zealand, as well as an avid yachtsman and sport fisherman. He needed a new boat to cruise his beloved Pacific, and now has a striking vessel with a shark grey, silver and charcoal superstructure.

The yacht’s original brief and plans were a world apart from the finished yacht, Greg said. “We flew to Queenstown, the country’s spectacular southern ski capital, near which Michael has one of his homes and a private golf course... The first brief was for an 80’ custom vessel and we discussed this in detail.

But when I went away, I kept thinking about it, and the family, and the boat, and eventually rang Michael back and said I didn’t believe we had the right idea. He was relieved, because he had been thinking the same thing, so we sat down and started again.” Hill selected Alloy Yachts, which, although it is perhaps better known as one of the world’s top super sailboat builders, has now built nine motoryachts, including *Vs1*. Gregory C. Marshall Naval Architects Ltd., has strong associations with Pacific rim yards and has a 148’ vessel, called *Big Fish*, under way at M&W, another New Zealand superyacht builder.



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The 148' *Big Fish* promises to be GCMNA's next "big thing" and features a stern "beach" area designed with more than 100 linear feet of folding platforms for tying up seaplanes, sailboats and tenders



GCMNA entirely created the interior of the 130' *After You*, built at the Horizon shipyard, using a sophisticated 3D program, a process that allows owners to get accurate renderings of what their yachts will look like; GCMNA also uses 3D technology for all the technical areas, such as engine rooms



Greg's passion for boats started a long way away from New Zealand in his native Canada. Although his father was an architect, no one in the family other than Greg had any particular interest in boats. "I am not sure where I got the yacht design addiction gene from," he said. Nevertheless he was bitten. "In primary school, I can remember beginning my week with a clean desktop and, as the week unfolded, neat rows of yacht profiles—usually 20 or so to a desktop—would emerge. Every weekend the janitor would relegate untold inspiration to history." Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays were spent drawing madly. Greg's father eventually contacted prolific naval architect and designer William Garden, who lived on an island north of Victoria, not far from the Marshall family. "When school completed Bill offered me a job doing some drafting work," Greg said. This first experience was short lived but, through what Greg suspects to have been another fatherly intervention, Garden eventually became his mentor and introduced him to practical boat design in the late 1970s. Greg attended the naval architecture program at the Marine Institute in Newfoundland, however he credits mostly Bill Garden, with whom he worked for seven years, for his understanding of boat design. "There has been many a time when the 'home-spun' design basics that Bill taught me have saved my bacon when the high-tech answers would have bombed," Greg said. Although his portfolio is incredibly diversified, Bill Garden in those days designed mostly sailboats and was one of the first designers to use yards in Taiwan and the China Coast, notably Cheoy Lee.

GCMNA worked closely with Montie Twining on the *Calixas 105*, launched in 2006, and is developing two new models for the Texas-based firm



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It was Bill Garden again who launched the next phase of Greg's career by encouraging him to go assist his friend Ed Fry, who at the time was working on a large yacht project in Houston. The British Columbia native, then 24, arrived in Houston wearing a ski jacket. "In the new venture I learned a lot about the realities of how hard it is to 'get' large yacht projects and it was certainly in Houston that I learned the commercial realities of the industry." Eight years went by before Greg decided to return home. "I came to the conclusion that keeping a Canadian in Houston is like keeping Frosty the Snowman there," he said. In 1994, Greg relocated to Victoria, where he had a major breakthrough with the Pacific Mariner 65. The principals behind that build bought Westport Shipyard, which led Greg to collaborate once again with Bill Garden, who designed the hull of the Westport 130. In addition to styling the Westport 130, Greg also did the exterior styling of the Westport 112 and designed the Pacific Mariner 85.

In 1998, Gord Galbraith joined Greg as the firm's number two architect, and Gregory C. Marshall Naval Architects

**Gregory  
C. Marshall**

Ltd. (GCMNA), led by the dynamic duo, has been on a roll ever since. Today GCMNA employs 20 staff members and students to create designs using sophisticated computer modeling. The firm's largest project to date is a 230' vessel styled by Michael Kirschstein of London. A 148' passage maker and a 98' sloop are under way at a Turkish commercial yard called Yardimci in Tuzla. GCMNA's forte, however, has always been the Pacific Rim. The design firm was involved with the Vision 68 and 74 series at Horizon Yachts, one of the world's top 10 boat builders, and worked with J.C. Espinosa, who styled the Horizon 130 series, currently building at Horizon's new Premier yard in Taiwan. The first two 130' Premiers have been delivered to North American owners. In addition to the 130 Premier series' naval architecture and engineering, GCMNA, using sophisticated 3D modeling technology, created the elegant interior of *After You*, hull no. two of the series, which was shown at the Fort Lauderdale International Boat Show last fall. Also at Horizon, GCMNA introduced the Calixas series, in 2007 winning a World Yachts Trophy for the design of the Calixas 105. GCMNA is actively working on two new models for Calixas (a name born of the contraction of California and Texas), a firm headed by entrepreneur Montie Twining, a long-time friend of Greg Marshall.



Gregory C. Marshall designed this winning vessel around the owner's personality; VvSI won three Yachts Trophies in Cannes last year



**GCMNA created naval architecture and structural engineering for this 230' project, designed by Michael Kirschstein's team; a 70-footer reminiscent of 1920s commuters, bottom left, and project Aroha, right are among an extensive list of new projects**

There are also 30', 38' and 48' San Juan sports yachts, speedy vessels in the style of Long Island commuters of yesteryear; a Fathom 40 production cruiser sold through 13 hulls; a 28' tender to put a tentative toe in that market; and a 138' explorer getting under way at McMullen and Wing with an interior intriguingly described as an "organic fusion of art deco and rustic." But the 148' *Big Fish*, to be reviewed later this year, promises to be GCMNA's next "big thing." This is a quite revolutionary design based again on the personality of an owner who doesn't like "stuff" inside the boat, and wants to maximize views and water sports usage. The stern "beach" area was designed especially with these goals in mind. More than 100 linear feet of folding platforms were added around the stern, for tying up seaplanes, sailboats and the tender while leaving lots of room for swimmers.

"There is more to yacht design than efficiency and engineering formulas. To create a yacht that satisfies your dreams demands a balance of art and science, of creativity and technology, of appearance and performance...It's this blend of artistry and naval architecture know-how that sets GCMNA apart," Greg said. With a design office located on an apple orchard in scenic British Columbia, a passion for boat design that has endured for 40 years, and a blend of technical savvy and personality, it looks as if Greg Marshall might have achieved that balance.

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