

Tim Miller found the following while going through his files. He thinks this dates back to the days of yahoo groups or before. Dick Avery may have written it after the Rendezvous in Portsmouth in 2002.

Designing the Commander

by former Director of Styling, Dick Avery

Since you guys are my heroes, I thought I'd give you a little background on how I came to design Commanders.

In 1958 I was a senior at Cleveland Institute of Art. We had a design competition for the Industrial Design class. All work we had done in sculpture, silver smithing, interior design and other electives could be shown.

The most important design project was a car model and rendering, because Ford Motor Co. design executives would be the judges of the show. I won 2nd place money and a job offer to go to Ford Styling in Dearborn. I took the job and moved to Michigan. After the first summer there, I decided I wanted a boat to run around in. That winter I designed and built a small tunnel-hull outboard. It ran so well with a 15 hp motor, I decided to make molds off of it and make some fiberglass boats to sell. It was only 8' long and you rode it like a motorcycle. I called it Go Boat.

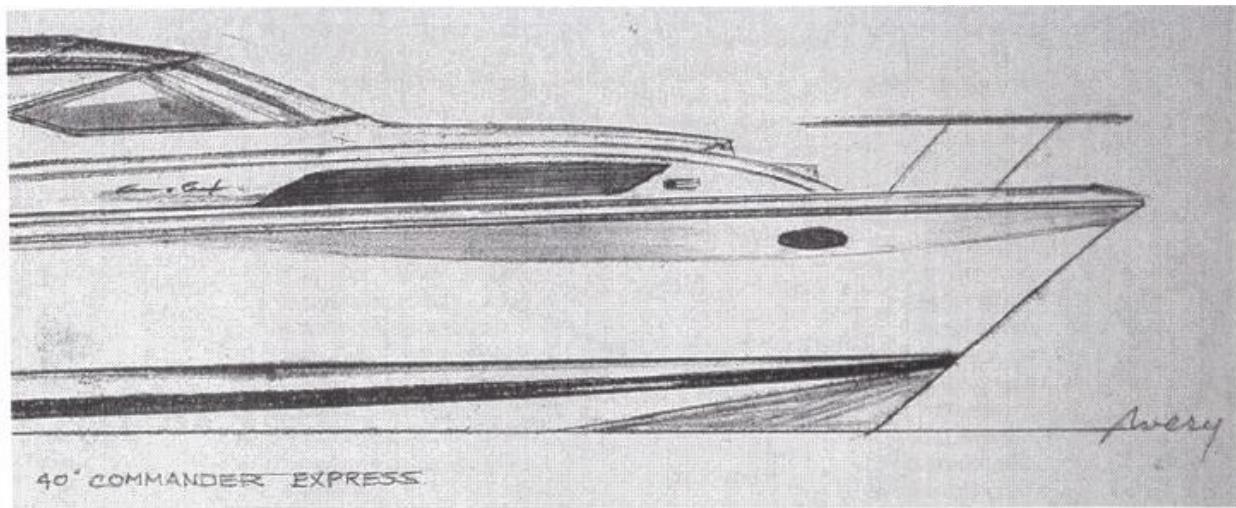
I was working in the Advanced Styling studio at Ford and we did concept and show car proposals. It was a fun job and some of the stuff we did got into production. I had been there for 4 years when Chris Craft ran an ad in the Detroit newspaper for an automobile stylist to move to Florida and design boats. It was January and bitter cold. I decided to try for it and sent resume, portfolio and some boat drawing and ideas for cruisers. Chris Craft Personnel called and asked me to come to Pompano Beach for an interview. I was on the next plane. Met with Fred Hudson, designer, as you know, and Chuck Burgess, CC's Sales and Marketing VP. We got along great and I started February, 1962.

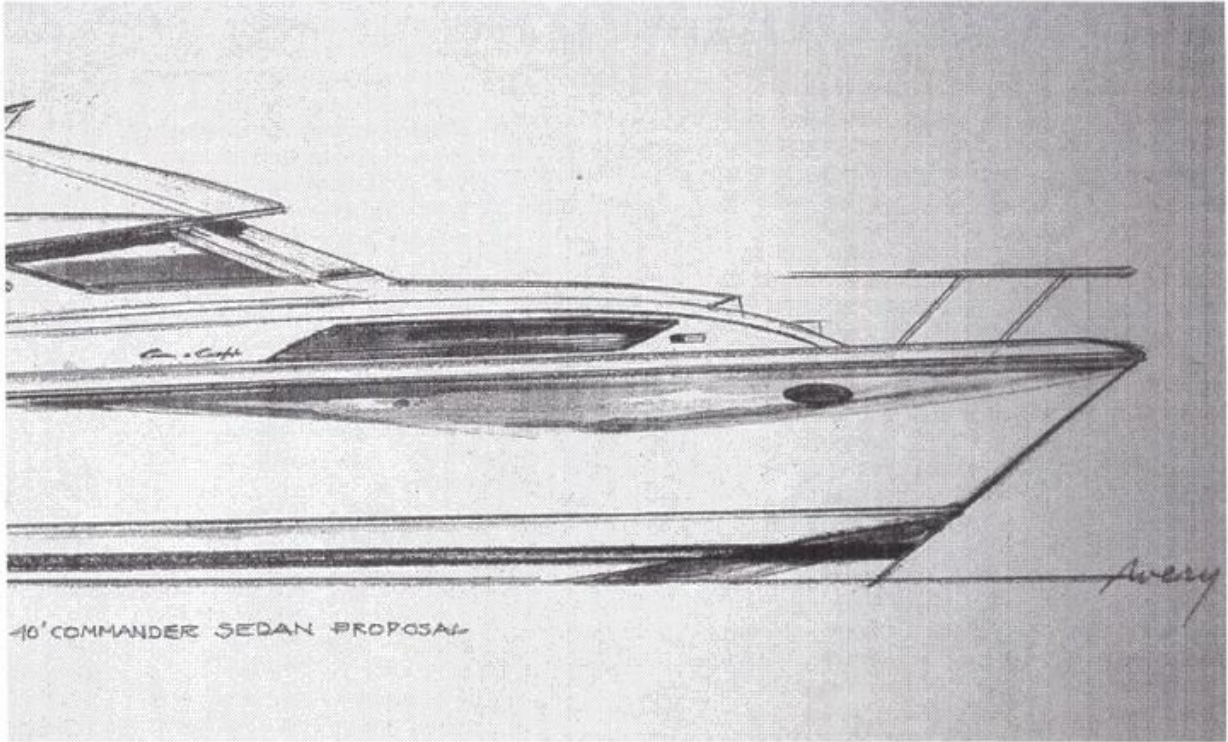
At that time Fred Hudson was finishing up the design for the 38' Commander with A.W. Mackerer. My first jobs were designing sport boats, Constellation cabins, plywood Cavaliers and Roamers. A couple years later Fred got a call from Dick Teague, Design VP at American Motors asking Fred if he would come back to Detroit and head up a car design studio. Fred said the money was too good to refuse. After Fred left I met with Chuck Burgess and told him I wanted to become Director of Styling. His response was "You know, the further up the flagpole you go the farther your ass hangs out". I said I could do the job and would like the challenge.

I was allowed to hire a "boat nut" designer to help with the number of models we had to keep up with and found Burt Holmes. He stayed with me for years. Burt did beautiful renderings for presentation to the Product Development committee, a group made up of representatives from Styling, Sales, Engineering and Production. This group decided which new product to develop. Sales would request a new model that dealers had asked for. The division, size and type of boat were given the Styling department to work on. We would make sketches and line drawings for the look above the waterline. When we were satisfied with the look, we would do a color rendering to show Sales. They would set up a product development meeting for discussion and questions. Engineering would take our styling drawings and design a bottom for that division. They would place engines and tanks, then floor and cockpit heights could be located. A visibility line from the eyeball would be placed on the drawing, as you had to be able to see far enough ahead of the boat when running.

The Engineering department had a Chief Engineer and each division had at least one Engineer to work on new models. They completed package drawings with headroom, visibility and main bulkhead locations. Then the Styling department would adjust profile drawings to fit the firm package set up by Engineering, make a new rendering of the profile, sketches of interior layouts and other details. Then we would get Sales input and blessing on our proposals. The drawings would go back to Engineering and they would proceed with shop drawings for the plant where the boat would be built. After the shop drawings and specifications were done, the Engineer and I would go to the plant where

we would show renderings and drawing to the Plant Manager, Engineer and Plug builders, explaining how the boat would go together and answering any questions they had. I would visit the plant a few times while the plugs were being built to make sure the shapes were looking good and fair. When the plugs were approved, molds were built for production. The next visit to the plant would be to see the first boat and have the shake down cruise. This was the process all Chris Craft cruisers went through in their development. The Commanders were special to me because I envisioned them as floating sculptures, depicting strong, functional, speedy elegance.





Tim Miller: Does this one look like something we see today?

