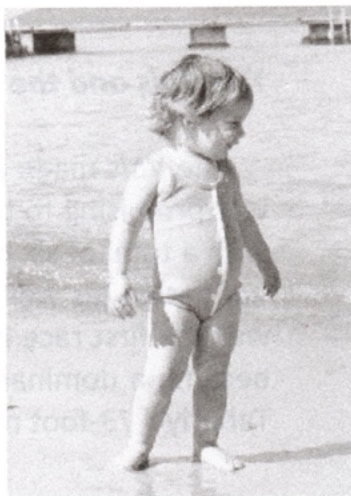




To keep things simple, Dick tried to streamline the construction process and do without fiberglass molds. He knew he was onto something but he didn't persevere. *"I think this is one of my worst qualities; I get an idea and if it isn't an instant success I drop it and move on to something else."* Instead, Dick says the process was eventually perfected by Derrick Kelsall, an Englishman now living in New Zealand, who was the first to finish an OSTAR in a multihull.

In all about 30 Vals were built, one in Singapore, a few in Europe, and most in the States. The first six or seven Vals had a central cockpit, two akas (cross arms,) and a small aft cabin. *"Later on, I decided those boats were rather flexible. To stiffen up the boat, it would be better to have one single aka for the connecting structure. I called them wing akas. They were deep enough from top to bottom to put a bunk and galley out over the water. That stiffened the structure up greatly. All of the later ones had wing akas, much better boats."*



The original Val

When Harry sold *Galliard* in his later years, he gave all the instruments and his records to Dick. *"Harry's wife told me, Harry spent a lot of time documenting all of this, so that you'd understand it. I never did understand it."* Later on, Dick gave all the equipment to MIT to add to Harry's

archives. *"I hope they've been able to sort it out better than I."*

When Harry died, he left Dick \$5,000, presumably as compensation for the design. *"I didn't charge him much at the time because I was planning to sell his design as a series. I guess he thought he owed me something more for my time."* Dick used the money to invest in a computer and hull design software to learn computer-aided design.

The Vals and the 1976 OSTAR

The *Vals* made a strong showing in the 1976 OSTAR. It was promising to be a tremendous race for the Newicks—with a total of six boats entered, including four of the new *Val* design (as well as *Three Cheers* and *Gulf Streamer*). It was the first race in the sport's history in which multihulls became a dominant factor, but the race was won by Eric Taberly's 73-foot monohull.

Rory Nugent, who had a hand in building the first half dozen *Vals* with his partner, Ovid Ward, entered one. A couple of young guys from Boston came down every weekend to help Dick and Rory build it. *"They didn't charge us anything. They just wanted to be on ground floor of creating the series. So we loaned the mold to them and they built a boat and one of them, Tom Ryan, entered the OSTAR too."*

Another *Val* in the process of being built was for Canadian sailor, Mike Birch, a serious competitor. Dick didn't know anything about Mike, except that he had

wandering around in the far end of Newport Harbor.

"No," Blaise muttered to himself, *"I can't believe it,"* and reached for the phone to call Newick.

Pat Newick was out of bed but in the state which Dick calls "BC" (Before Coffee). She blearily answered the phone and was asked by Blaise, *"Do you have any Val trimarans on a summer cruise in these waters?"*

Pat replied that she didn't think so, asked Dick, and from the bedroom he sleepily responded the same.

During this pause, Dennis Blaise observed from his second-story window in Newport that there was a crowd assembling on the dock. A committee boat hurriedly put out, and then Blaise saw the *Val* tack, which revealed the racing number 66 painted on her topsides. Someone shouted. *"My God! That little sliver of a boat...I can't believe it."*

Pat heard this commotion when she returned to the phone, and presently Dennis told her, *"I think a Val has just finished the race. Who is number 66?"*

As Pat shuffled through the phone-side papers for the list, she called excitedly to her husband, *"Dick! Who is number 66? They say they think a Val has just finished. I can't believe it!"*

Dick emerged calmly from the bedroom with a very early morning grin and said, "*That's Mike Birch. I can believe it!*"

The event was big news in France, and Newport was crawling with French reporters. Eric Tabarly had already received his country's Legion of Honor for his 1972 win. He and Alain were interviewed endlessly in Newport and greeted back home with a ticker tape parade. However, Alain's second place win was called into question due to broken halyards that required a port stop for repair. It was reported that six people were aboard to help as he left the harbor, when race rules stipulate that he must leave the harbor on his own. Not wanting to disqualify a hero nor his boat sponsored by Club Med, the Royal Western Yacht Club issued a time penalty which brought him down to fifth place—and put Mike into second.

Further controversy erupted when the size of the big boats sparked a debate over size limits, which eventually resulted in new restrictions for the 1980 OSTAR. "I remember the journalists all marveling at our little boat tied up next to this monster French boat and one young, French reporter saying in a thick French accent, "Theez is ze real winnair."

Third Turtle continued to race, captained by Bill Homewood in the 1980 and the 1984 OSTAR, averaging a day less than Mike's time, but was lost en route from the U.S. to Plymouth for her fourth OSTAR, under a new, inexperienced skipper.