After managing boat building and repair projects at several marinas and yards around the Caribbean—including extensive recovery work in Grenada in the aftermath of Hurricane Ivan, the 2004 storm that devastated the island—Brookes returned to boatbuilding in 2008 with his original partners in Fortress Marine. For their first major build they're turning out a 70' Brookes-designed day-charter cat on the same slightly adjusted molds he's used now for more than 20 years.

As we left *Falcon* and walked to the open Quonset hut, where the new boat is coming together, Brookes talked about the importance of materials. Briefly put, he turns to what is consistent and of good quality. He's always relied on silicon bronze screws in his cats, for example, with the exception of *Eagle*, which got some bronze ring nails. The new boat is no exception. For plywood, Brookes still specifies only Bruynzeel; and for strip planks, clear Western red cedar. He considers that species to be his standard, though he's also planked the new boat in ¼" x 1¾" Douglas-fir strips.

They're covered inside and out with multiple layers of 950g/m² biaxial E-glass from SP, the marine business unit of Gurit. Over the years he's changed from a Pettit epoxy in the early days with Spronk, to WEST SYSTEM, which Phil Weld introduced him to. Since then he's used the Gougeon Bros.' product on all his major builds, including the latest boat.

Sourcing isn't a problem. Boatbuilding materials are consistently freighted to St. Kitts from Miami on relatively short notice. Granted, it's not as convenient as a delivery truck coming by within a day of ordering, or having large inventory in a stockroom. But with a bit of planning, Brookes is able to keep what he needs on hand in a couple of shipping containers behind the Quonset hut.

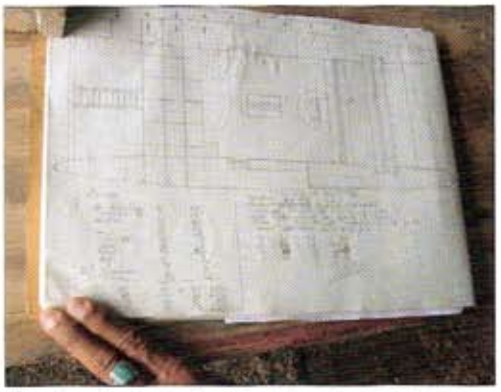
Fortress Marine's shop is low tech and low overhead by any measure, but given the climate, it's entirely adequate. The Quonset hut may be just one notch above a Caribbean tradition of building out in the open, right on the beach, but in Brookes's experience it's the only refinement necessary to ensure quality wood/epoxy composite construction.

"We build just as good a boat as if you had an air-conditioned shed with a concrete floor and an office," he said. Inside his shop, the open ends funnel air through the shaded space, cooling it to an acceptable working temperature.

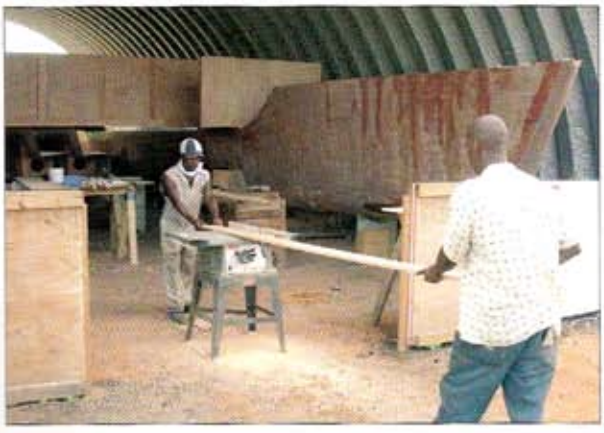
The completed hulls of the new cat paralleled the sides of the Quonset hut, and bulkheads for the connecting box beams were in place. The shop floor, with worktables and tools, was the open space between the hulls. Intricate plywood benches destined for the boat, which also serve as structural support between hulls, were preassembled and awaiting installation. The bulkheads already in place consisted of ¼" plywood panels sandwiching a grid made of Douglas-fir lumber. Multiple bulkheads will then be tied together by a plywood skin, to form a wide box beam forward. The two benches will be installed forward and aft of the after beam, and tie in structurally to the hulls and bridge deck.

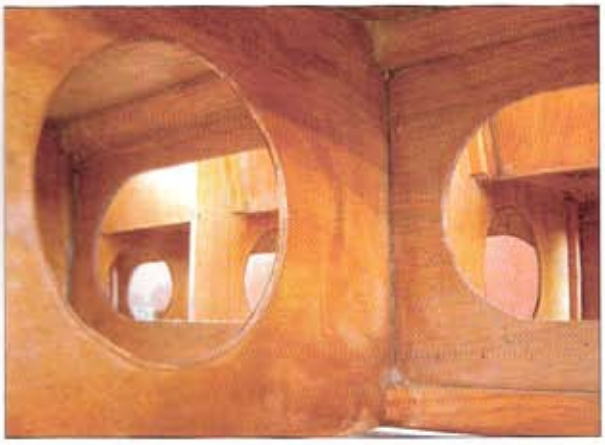
When our discussion wandered too far ahead for me to follow, Brookes got out his plans. *All* the plans are on a few sheets of graph paper. "I don't make a whole lot of drawings. The details are in here," he said, tapping his head with his finger.

What he has in his head, though, is the cumulative experience of decades of work, amounting to some 20 new-builds or total rebuilds, and countless hours and miles of professional sailing with day-charter passengers on board.



Brookes's plans for his new catamaran are contained on a few sheets of graph paper.





Top—*Clear Douglas-fir for stringers and strip planks.*
Middle—*An open-ended Quonset hut shelters the new-build project while coaxing a breeze to cool workers on the shop floor between the hulls.*
Bottom—*Plywood structure inside the boat's passenger benches will supplement the strength of the aft box beam on the new boat.*