

THE YACHTING LIFE

P E E R S

Boris Mohorko

A Slovenian telecommunications mogul looks for a better world from the deck of his new Northern Marine 64

BY CHRIS CASWELL

PHOTOGRAPHY BY ROGER STEEN

The great winged eyebrows alternately soar with delight and swoop into a frown above piercing blue eyes as Boris Mohorko considers his future, an ever-present Dunhill International smoldering between his fingers. His mobile face lights up to mirror his words, "Who knows? It is all wonderful!

"Now it is my time to live the dream. As they say in the army, 'I've served my time.' Now I can live my life how I like it—not to conform, not to please others. I've had the house and the children are grown with kids of their own. Life is like the game of hockey, and the final quarter is mine."

Boris leans back in the pilothouse of *Milagro*, his newly launched Northern Marine 64, and says with a trace of sadness, "I think it is time to disconnect from this crazy world of ours. After the Berlin Wall fell, I thought we would build a better world. But the wars and the insecurities continue." And disconnect is exactly what he plans to do for the next few years.

Mohorko, who is careful that you know he is Slovenian, will be cruising north into Canadian and Alaskan waters as you read these words, having taken delivery of the dream of a lifetime. *Milagro* has been fitted to his exacting specifications, the most notable of which is that she is easily singlehanded. She is seaworthy enough to carry him anywhere his heart desires.

With his tousled graying hair and accented English, Mohorko brings to mind Sean Connery in his role as the veteran submarine captain in "The Hunt For Red October," but Boris has a playful side, as well. During the final stages of construction on his yacht, he used a bicycle for transportation around the Anacortes, Washington, home of Northern Marine, pedaling it furiously between the yard and the marina and his hotel in all weather conditions. "It's good for me," he says innocently, then glances at the remains of his cigarette. "I know, I know, I should quit. But I like cigarettes and, after all, the damage is done."

Mohorko came to boating in mid-life while he vacationed one summer among the Adriatic islands and befriended a group of commercial sardine fishermen. "They took me along with them, and taught me about the sea. Most important, they taught me how to care for the boat and the engine which, in turn, took care of them."

Hooked on boats, he bought a big inflatable for exploring, then a Nauticat

36 motorsailor, which he kept in the Baltic, followed by an Island Gypsy 44 for several seasons in the Adriatic and Croatia.

"But always, I wanted to see more, go farther." That quest led to building a Doggersbank 59 designed by Vripack and built at the Perini yard in Turkey. "That construction taught me a lot about what I wanted, and also that I needed a yard that would do it my way and properly the first time."

Before the Doggersbank, he had learned about Northern Marine from magazine articles and was impressed. When he visited, though, nothing clicked. After the Doggersbank sold, Mohorko remained intrigued by the Northern Marine yachts and this time everything fell into place when he met with Stuart Archer, the Northern Marine naval architect.

"I liked Stuart immediately and, when I gave him my ideas and my design, the answer to every question was 'no problem.' Besides, a boat is like a lady: you either love her or not, and I love the Northern 64."

Boris chose the 64 because she was "as big as possible, small enough to maneuver alone, yet still fit into harbors and marinas." The result is a tough voyager on the outside and a comfortable home on the inside. *Milagro* reflects Boris' strong views on what constitutes a proper yacht. "There should be," he says with a flight of his brows and a snort, "no wallpaper on a yacht." And, he adds scornfully, "Living room furniture does not belong on a boat."

So it is that *Milagro* resembles a fine men's club, with mahogany paneling, a writing desk and bookshelves in the saloon, and a warm Jatoba sole throughout. The master suite is a comfortable retreat amidships. Guests have the choice of a VIP stateroom in the bow or a double stateroom below the pilothouse. "Guests," Boris says with a twinkle, "didn't pay anything for your boat. They should be happy with what they get."

Boris doesn't expect many guests, so *Milagro* has been set up for singlehanding with five helm stations (flying bridge, pilothouse, two wings and afterdeck), bow and stern thrusters, and husky warping capstans for line handling. The after station, for example, has remote controls

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for the anchor windlass so, when Med-mooring, Boris can drop anchor, back into the quay, and handle the lines himself.

The galley is fully enclosed and separate from the saloon. "Who wants to have smells in the saloon or pilothouse? And who wants to see when the cook makes a mistake and drops dinner?" The galley is all white. "White is easy to keep clean, because you can see the spills."

Milagro has everything Boris wants, and nothing is superfluous. He vetoed the usual spa on the top deck in favor of twin Castoldi diesel jet tenders ("Much more practical"), had Northern Marine install its first passerelle ("How would I get ashore?"), and grins at the big barbecue on the afterdeck ("Ah, that was just to pamper myself").

Mohorko's background is a little murky, though he admits he was in "telecommunications." With a little prying, it turns out his multinational company grew large on the sales of two-way radios and cellular phones that were used for military communications during the Croatian/Serbian conflict.

"I reached a point where it was time to invest in my business to grow it, or sell it. I decided it was time for the younger generation to take over—as you grow older, you grow more cautious."

While building his career, he had dreamed of boats and of setting off with no commitments. So Mohorko sold out, tidied his affairs, and arrived on the doorstep of Northern Marine in late 2002.

The resulting contract specified delivery in 12 months and, though our interview 16 months later was in a saloon filled with sawdust and craftsmen, he remained unfazed. "What I learned from the Doggersbank is patience: that you must never rush a project like this. The goal is quality and that is what is important, not some due date. Otherwise, you will spend years fixing things that should have been done properly at first."

Floating with her boot top high above the water with tons of fuel still to be loaded, *Milagro* seems to tug at her lines. You sense Mohorko is holding himself in

Boris Mohorko, surveying the world from the deck of his Northern Marine 64, is in command of his destiny. His yacht *Milagro* has five helm stations; from one, Boris maneuvers her in close quarters, (middle and bottom). These stations ease the chore of singlehanding.

check as well. "I need to leave by the end of May," he says, since he has major plans for his shakedown cruise. *Milagro* will venture north through Canada into Alaska, and Boris wants to reach Dutch Harbor in the Aleutians.

"Everyone brags about rounding Cape Horn, but the Aleutians are every bit as rough and just as beautiful, so I think I want to explore them a bit. And maybe—just maybe," he says with a gesture of reaching out to touch something, "I will go beyond to Kamchatka because I won't be this way again."

After venturing north, he plans to stop back at Northern Marine for any last-minute projects and then head south along the Pacific coast. "Then I'll have to make the decision: Do I go straight or turn right? Straight means Central and South America, the Panama Canal. Right means the Pacific islands. But I'm not going to decide until I get there.

"That's the beauty of life, and I don't want any pressure. I don't want to have to be someplace on the 15th. The world is changing, and I need to see the people, the customs. I do have a secret dream of going up the Amazon—I loved that movie, 'Fitzcarraldo'."

One area that is not on his immediate must-see list is the Mediterranean, "I think I have seven good active years left, and I'll do the world with them. Later, when I have less energy, I'll do the Med, Greece, the Adriatic."

"When I'm old and sitting on a terrace with my coffee and," he grins, "a cigarette, I want to look back and see if my life was more or less beautiful and as I wanted. If so, then I will count myself successful."

And the name of the yacht? "*Milagro* is Spanish, which I think is a wonderful and romantic language. *Milagro* means 'miracle,' and that is what she is—the miracle of realizing my life's dream." □

