

Forward Lookout

by Keith Taylor

Keith Taylor is editorial consultant to *Cruising World* and *Sailing World* magazines, with the title editor-at-large. For the last 20 years he has followed the sailing industry closely, first as editor of *Soundings* and later as editor of *Sail*. The opinions he expresses are his own and are not necessarily those of *Sailing Scene*.

Customizing "Pacs" Ease Outfitting

Making life easy for salesmen and customers is a mission for Pat Reischmann of St. Petersburg, FL. The energetic manager of Centerport Yachts South describes himself as the technical expert in a string of three dealerships headquartered in Centerport, NY. The other office is in Ft. Lauderdale.

With a sailboat racing background that spans 25 years, Reischmann is quick to apply the lessons of proper sail control and sound outfitting practices to selling more sailboats.

Last year Centerport went from being Irwin Yachts newest dealer to their largest dealer. Their record: nine Irwin 52 mod-

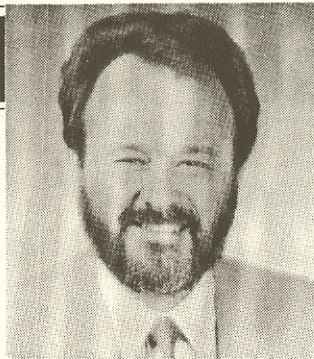
els sold in the 1989 season just ended. The secret, according to Reischmann, eliminates confusion for customers and the dealership.

His answer is customizing pacs — lots of 'em. On the Irwin 52, for example, Reischmann sells a \$22,000 sail handling and control package called the Sail/Ease Pac that transforms the big comfortable cruiser into a dream single-hander. Of course, single-handing is not what Reischmann is selling. He's pushing safe, comfortable, easily-accomplished sailing for couples.

The pac concept works in both directions. The pacs are uniform equipment packages supplied and supported by manufactur-

ers or distributorships who work out their specifications in close collaboration with Centerport. There are packages for electronics, safety, ease of docking, electric or hydraulic winches, and for on-board electrical power and anchoring.

According to Reischmann, boats that were previously selling at an average price of \$285,000 were leaving the dock last year pac'ed up to an average of \$365,000. Price, he asserts, is not his customers' first concern. Customers want gear and systems that work and are reliable. And Centerport can tell the customer the price because all installations on a particular line of boats involve the same



time, parts and equipment.

Says Reischmann, "We deal with the intangibles. That's something that most dealers and manufacturers do a lousy job with."

Invariably customers get fogbound trying to navigate through all the choices to be made when outfitting their new boat. When the bills start to roll in and the intangibles become tangible, disillusionment begins, a process that worsens as repairs and modifications become necessary.

The Centerport Sail/Ease Pac for the Irwin 52 calls for a cutter-rigged boat with roller-furling headsails. The staysail is self-tending and loose-footed. All sail controls for the boat lead to the cockpit, including the main halyard and single-line reefing. All lines are color-coded with solid colors and feed through a bank of sheet-stoppers. An electric winch takes the grunt work out of hoisting the main. The boom is supported on a rigid boom vang and the mainsail is stowed using the Dutchman sail control system. Other features in the Sail/Ease Pac include a whisker pole and hydraulic backstay adjuster.

Reischmann emphasizes that Centerport does not look for a big profit in its packages. Rather, it approaches them as sales tools, knowing that the installers have performed their jobs enough times to control costs, and lower billing time. "We try to make the pacs affordable," he says.

Harnessing the advance of sailboat technology is a process that is beyond the average customer and, for that matter, most dealers and manufacturers, Reischmann asserts. By breaking down the necessary equipment for safe, enjoyable short-handed operation of a big sailboat into separate packages, customers are able to readily decide how their boat should be outfitted. All pacs are described in detail in separate brochures.

One popular item is the Dock Pac which includes an electrically powered bow thruster for easier maneuvering alongside, and a powered, self-stowing system for the typical, heavy, electrical umbilical cord aboard modern boats.

Just dealing with the intangibles. ■