

## STEVE FRENCH and APPLIED CONCEPTS OVER 30 YEARS OF DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY LEADERSHIP

### FRENCHS' ROOTS-

Every art form has its prodigies. In the world of yacht design, Steve French, owner of Applied Concepts Unleashed and French Yachts rightly qualifies. As a youngster in the



Midwest, French loved fishing and was constantly drawing pictures of boats and building boat models. French started his professional marine industry career as an adolescent, riding his bicycle some 17 miles to Sanford marina where he learned about repairing rusty, rotten, broken boats from the ground up.

*Steve French age 7 with his first big catch*

By age 16, French had gleaned enough knowledge that AMF Robalo hired him. By ages 17 he graduated to taking a greater share of the design work for both Robalo and Cobia where he penned lines for runabouts, cabin boats and several patrol vessels that were manufactured by the hundreds. At nineteen, Seyler Marine hired French to create the revolutionary F22 center console

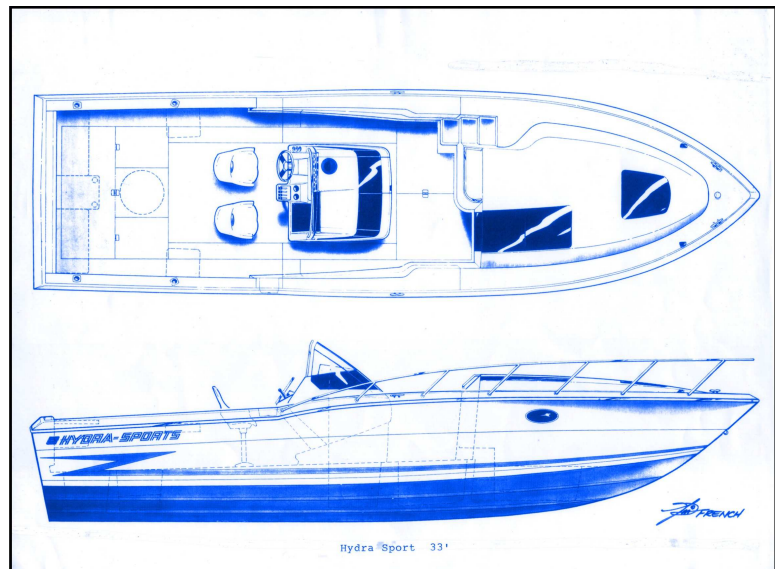


on the Hydradyne stepped hull. This model ultimately sold more than 200 units.

*The F-22, a French design 1983, became a cult classic with owners still refurbishing them today for their great fishability.*

At the tender age of 21, French -- already counted as a veteran -- designed what became the wildly successful Hydrasports 3300 Vector. "French thought differently from any other designers. But his radical ideas were spot on!" said Hydrasports president Alex Leva, flashing a broad smile at the memory. "We ended up selling several hundred of those boats" Boat builders today are still catching up with many aspects of that design.

*The 1985 Hydrasports 3300 designed, tooled and brought to production by French and his team in 93 days (Same time as the P51 Mustang in WWII)*



French designed production boats

paying his dues on his way up the industry ladder. His final chapter in that venue took him to Pursuit Sportfishing Boats, a Florida branch of the Slickers' family empire in 1987.

Joel Vega - former tooling supervisor at Pursuit Boats and currently at Meilahn Yachts -- also worked with French at Garlington and elsewhere. "At Pursuit, French designed boats that sold well over 100 hulls," Vega says. "But his real strong points are his creativity and his feel for the market. Steve pioneered the use of composites in custom boatbuilding. And his CNC jig construction proved revolutionary, dropping the jig-building time for a boat from many weeks to a day or two."

When French felt that he had reached his limits with production boats he set his sights on custom boats. Even with over a thousand boats on the water from molds he had drawn and or built he knew to design serious fishing machines he needed to be designing custom yachts. His first significant step toward that goal came with Garlington Marine in 1988, today known as Garlington Landeweer.

At age 23, French met Richard Garlington and began designing multi-million dollar custom sportfishing yachts. French recalls "It was amazing to be collaborating ideas with Richard, John Rybovich and one of my mentors Dan McCarthy at the same time." In his portfolio you'll find the Garlington 63, 44 as well as the 58 that ultimately has been produced as the world acclaimed 61-footer. In total, Garlington built over 45 boats using Steve French designs. While Richard had built beautiful boats before, Garlington's new signature looks are the compound curving forms that Steve French has mastered.



*The 1989 Garlington 63' Introduced Garlington Marine to composites and French's compound curving forms.*

## **OPENING APPLIED CONCEPTS-**

With his stature in the industry increasing, French decided, when Richard Garlington retired from his company in 1991, that it was time for the next phase... running his own design firm and even

building his own boats. He incorporated his freelance company, Applied Concepts Unleashed. A company that is known today as having written the book on modern sportfish design. Shortly after incorporating, French's family life took a catastrophic turn and French suddenly found himself a single father of three small children and the office space of Applied Concepts took on a slight day-care flavor. French, a committed parent, multi-tasked and the business continued to grow. His sons now are all accomplished tradesman in the yacht industry with his oldest now directing operations at Applied Concepts.



When the luxury tax hit in 1991 French had landed a contract to design and build his French 46 from the keel up. He would prove through this build that he could engineer a 46 flybridge with fully positive flotation. Its abilities would be tested by an owner trying to collect on insurance, but when she didn't go down the marine patrol made sure the scuttler did.



*French designed and managed construction of this unsinkable all composite 46' in 1991. She planes in reverse due to her rounded and tucked under stern.*

#### **Who's who client list-**

Over the next several years, French designed hulls, interiors, superstructures, flybridges and consulted for such notable companies as Jim Smith, Kincheloe Nickerson, T&D,

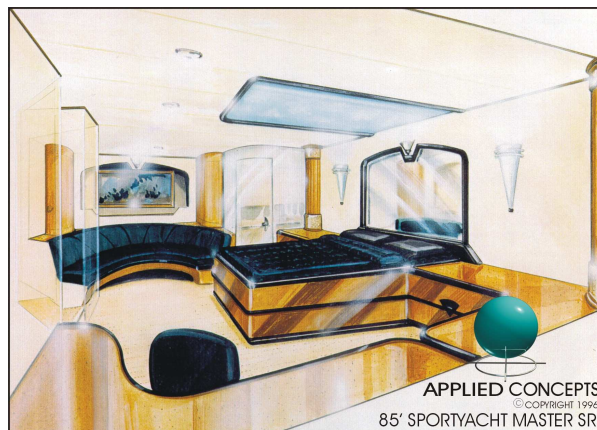
Whiticar, Monterey and America Custom Yachts increasing his notoriety with each commission.

John Meyer, founder of L&H Boats had worked closely with French on the build of his family's Garlington 63'. He had always been impressed with French's work at Garlington. Meyer commissioned French to design his 33-foot walkaround, which ultimately sold 14 boats and became the standard for all modern walkarounds. "We have done so much with walkarounds since John shared his vision with me for their use, I count him as one of my fishing mentors" states French. Meyer recalled, "Steve was the best at taking my thoughts and translating them to what I truly wanted to see! But he also has a real flare for contemporary lines."

*The trend setting L&H WalkAround French designed with his good friend John Meyer in 1993 (Still in production today)*



Over the next several years, Applied Concepts drew layouts for Tribute, Jim Smiths, American Custom, Whiticar and more. He was earning his stripes by proving the practicality of his creativity with the world's best. According to John Vance, President and CEO of Jim Smith Boats, "French is a very talented guy."



*As French states “we are the last generation to use handheld pens as our tool to convey our designs to the world, 10,000 years and now someone decided we should use a puck with a wire.”*

Applied Concepts produced complete yacht designs and CNC jigs from 30’ to 85’ throughout the nineteen nineties.

### **IMPACT OF FRENCH ON MODERN BOAT BUILDING-**

In 2000 and 2001, Applied Concepts continued building significant relationships in the Outer Banks. They created ground breaking designs with Sunny Briggs at Briggs Boatworks and nurtured one of the most successful custom design contracts in history, Paul Spencer at Spencer Yachts. Both builders are considered apex Carolina sportfish builders and Applied Concepts has worked hand in hand with both of them for over a decade.

Briggs, the more conservative of the two, wanted to take advantage of French's knowledge of advanced composite technology as well as his money- and time-saving construction methods. Spencer on the other hand, had a customer that wanted a more modern style and felt French and Applied Concepts were the best choice to take them in the right direction. Now at over seventy five boats, Applied Concepts has provided all of Spencer’s design and engineering services as well as CNC Jig systems and composite consulting.

Like most of the great Outer Banks boat builders, Sunny Briggs started his maritime career as a youngster working as a mate on charter boats out of the famous Oregon Inlet.

"I met Steve in the early 90s. At the time, we were lofting our jigs for our cold-molded boats by hand. Steve French came through the Wanchese/Manteo area, visiting builders and I asked him how we could do it better and faster? He talked about computer-cut jigs. I sent Applied Concepts drawings of Carolina-style designs that I liked and he came back with exactly what I envisioned." says Briggs.



*Sunny was the first to step into the Future world of CNC Jig systems with French since 1993.*



*French has designed for Sunny Briggs since their first jig together.*

"French knows so much about high performance boats and how they handle in all conditions. In today's market, things change so fast that no builder can keep up with it all single-handedly" says Briggs.

"I knew what I wanted and when I brought Steve French into the mix, our boats’ looks improved



measurably, performance improved and our customers liked him personally!"

Briggs says no matter what the boat ultimately looks like, its main goal will always be unsurpassed fishability. "The Lord made boats specifically to get fishermen to and from the fishing grounds safely. (Luke 5:1-11, John 21: 1-13...)" says Briggs.

"After working with him for a while, I discovered Steve French and I have a lot in common" admits Briggs. "He is always accommodating. He's very current on all the latest materials and construction techniques. He's also intimately aware of everything that everyone else is doing. Not that he shares secrets, but if a boat has been introduced and includes some new design or functional improvement, French knows about it," confides Briggs. "Bottom line, he has yet to ever tell me anything that is wrong. So why would I go elsewhere?" Why indeed.

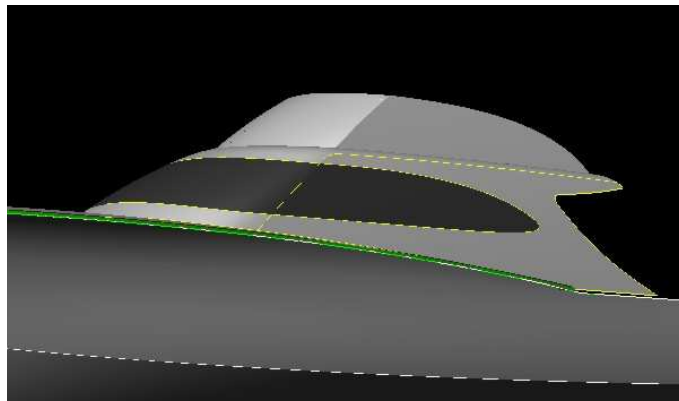
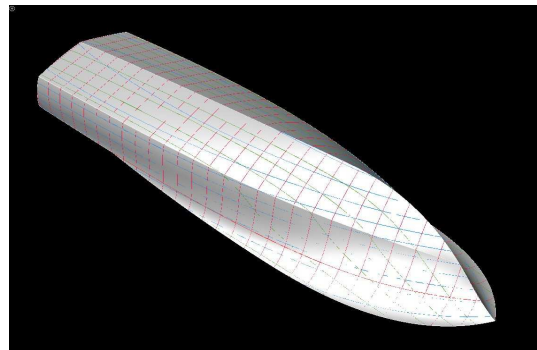


*Bridge Jigs like this are now the norm and make it possible for nearly everyone to build complex compound forms that are French's signature.*

Paul Spencer at Spencer Yachts has a somewhat similar story. "When I switched from being a charter captain to building boats, I immediately decided that I didn't want the usual strip-planked hulls. I knew I wanted a jig-built hull

so that I could get exactly the look and dimensions I wanted."

"I started out making my own jigs," says Spencer, "but found it very time consuming and in the end, I still needed to do lots of work to assure they were fair. Steve French was, at the time, making quite a name for himself building incredibly precise, computer-generated jigs. So, I gave him the deadrise measurements I wanted at different stations, etc. and French went to work. In no time, I got an easily assembled, accurate and affordable jig. It turned out perfectly. Applied Concepts' jigs save time and money, but they even impact a builder's workforce. Rather than requiring master craftsmen in all positions, with computer-controlled design and cutting of jigs, even run-of-the-mill craftsmen can produce a superior product." With truly skilled artisans harder to come by with each passing year, that's no small factor. French earned a relationship with Spencer yachts that opened the door to him styling the look that has carried them from 1999 through today.



*3D Models created by Applied Concepts are used to make boat building more accurate and efficient. The 3D models improve fairing, production time and space planning.*

Applied Concepts Unleashed pioneered the CNC Jig System to make boat building more efficient, some say too efficient. It's your choice if you want to build in wood, composites or metals. What once took a builder several months to sketch, cut out by hand and assemble can

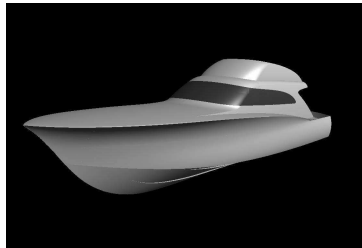
now be done in the space of about a week more accurately. That constitutes huge time and labor-cost saving!

"Something else that always impresses me is French's speed," continues Spencer. "When we sit down to discuss a new design, as fast as we can talk about it, he can draw it! He's very creative. Yes, he's a bit like a race horse... if you completely let him go; he'll run away on a very creative tack. But when I've given him my parameters, he's always given me exactly what I wanted."

Steve French had created designs for over fifty boats for Carolina builders, including Bayliss, Briggs, Carolina Yachts, Darby, Freedom, Holton, Hudson, Johnson, Kostinas, Perdue, Perry, Sculley, Wanchese and more by 2007.

By 2008, French's notoriety had spread from boat builders down to the end users. A mid-Atlantic builder based in Bear, Delaware – F&S Boatworks - once created traditional-looking sportfisherman, but also boasted the courage to give French his head and create something decidedly "futuristic". F&S Yachts president Jim Floyd recounts why he embarked on a journey to the future with French to satisfy the desire of a customer for something more modern with classic appeal.

"French came up with a radically different look for us for this one" And F&S has been attracting new customers with that look ever since. "He has a very, very good eye on what any boat *should* look like. He's a very



progressive thinker.

*F&S has had Applied Concepts design their vessels and provide their CNC Jigs since hull #5.*

French and his team at Applied Concepts Unleashed elevated the looks of my boats into a whole

different league. I consider Applied Concepts to be a good company with good people. And French is just a genuinely good guy.

*"The F&S 54' Enclosed express started a revolution in sportfishing design that is ongoing today. (French built the composite tower)"*





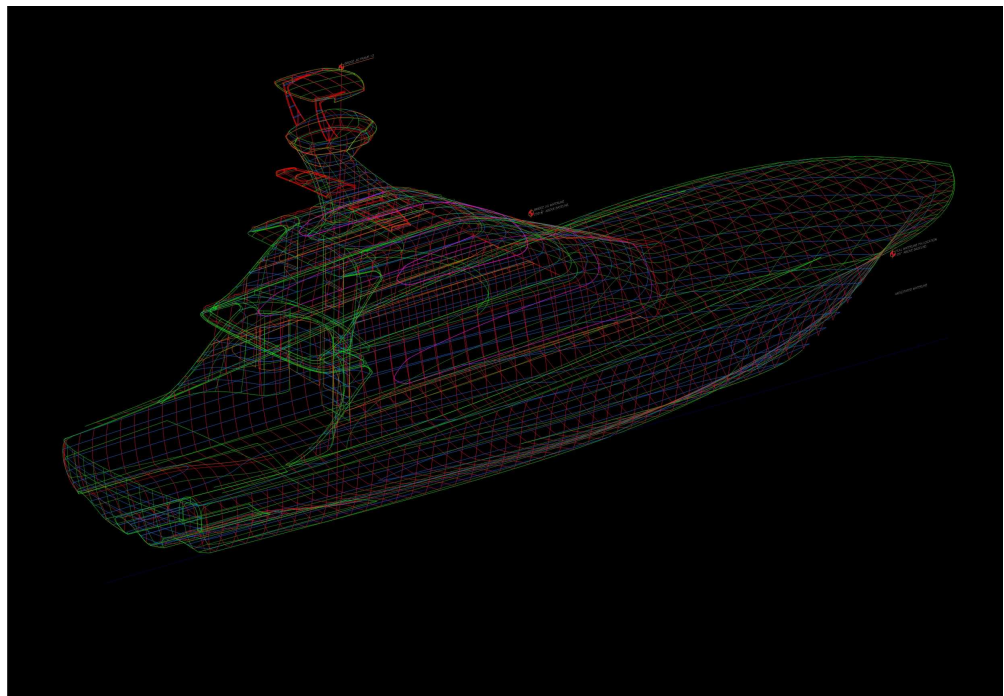
One of F&S's returning customers had already worked with French on their 45' walk around and then challenged him to create a 54' that would be equally special. The result is that French once again challenged us all with what a "traditional" sport fishing yacht is. This function centered design features a signature element of French, a composite Marlin tower, built by Steve French Enterprises. You certainly can't look at it from a distance and mistake it for anything else!

Applied Concepts peaked at around forty custom boat designs per year, each one unique and ranging from classic to contemporary. French states, "someone once asked me who we had *not* worked for that we wanted to, my answer was Merritt and Scarborough. Then Roy Merritt hired us to design the topsides of the new 86' and Ricky Scarborough Jr. called and purchased Applied Concepts Jig Systems for two boats.

### **ACUI PIONEERED 3D ENGINEERING FOR SPORT FISHING MACHINES-**

Today it is taken for granted that a multimillion dollar machine will be planned to the nines in modern CAD software and most likely in 3D. A mere twenty years ago French blew the

horn on the battlefield for efficient boat building and claimed that 3D planning would save time and money. He claims "Only a few at the time believed me, but today you wouldn't think of spending that kind of money on a vessel by simply sketching it on a napkin. We have been able



to create amazing things in different places and bring them together seamlessly." Like French's pride and joy the 86' Unleashed "Double Down".

*Complex 3D Models like this are every day work at Applied Concepts*

This is probably the most advanced sport fishing machine on the planet today. French built this all composite, 7200 HP beauty utilizing over a dozen subcontractors from around the Stuart, Florida area. Each tasked in their particular specialty and bonding all of the parts together into a single structure. "When the enclosed bridge and monolith tower were set onto the house there were a lot of doubters, but the my team had full confidence that the 3D planning we specialize in would result in a perfect joining of assemblies. It fit like a glove", recalls French with a smile. This type of thinking saves months. The result- a boat that meets the owners desires and performs for the captain with comfort and confidence in any sea.





*The 86' Unleashed is French's custom flagship. Designed in 1995 and built several years later (2008). This is likely the most advanced sport fishing machine on the planet today. Impeccable workmanship, systems and performance all combined in an elegance rare to sport fishing.*



Steve French's skills in manufacturing planning have placed him as consultant on many builds. Each one taking on the flavor of its' owner. To see an example of French's flexibility, you need only look at Meilahn Custom Yachts. This handsome custom catamaran was dreamed of by two brothers and French delivered the goods with his design team's full services. The Gemini 60 was truly a full decade ahead of its' time in many ways. "French is a true renaissance man, we couldn't have done it without him" stated Jeff Meilahn.



*The Gemini Cat a French Design and project management project utilizing Applied Concepts and their 3D CAD and Jig Systems.*

## **ADVANCES IN TECHNOLOGY-**

French's goal has always been to improve the market with every design he creates. This progressive attitude has brought us many useful innovations and many

that we now take for granted. For example he built the first Nidacore, now 3M, honeycomb vessel in the USA way back in 1985. The boat ran 74 MPH and pioneered vacuum bagging technology with plastic honeycomb. This is just now becoming the norm. His work with composite fighting chairs, riggers and towers is leading the way towards a better future for owners and captains alike. "Now its time I turn my attention towards designs and manufacturing that help our oceans. Our oceans have given us so much" French states somberly.

His latest design project for a well-known builder again flies in the face of tradition -- and that's just what the oldest boat builder in America wanted!

The Leek Family has owned and operated a boat building business on New Jersey's Mullica River since 1721, making them the oldest boat builder in America -- by a huge margin.



John Leek Sr. launched Ocean Yachts in 1977. The company competed among the big four production builders of large sportfishing yachts until the recent economic crash.

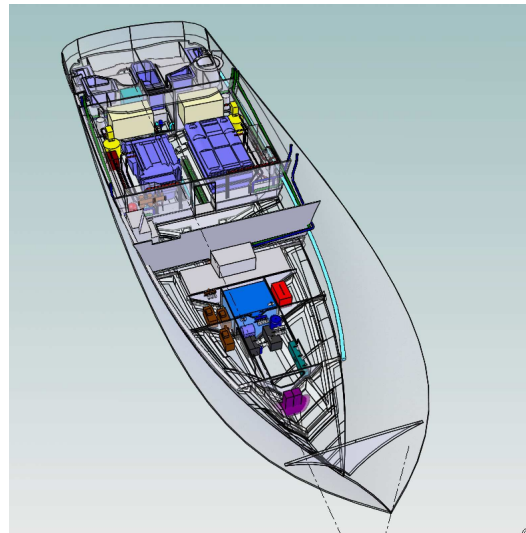
But recently, when it wanted to try something completely different, John Leek IV "JIV" contacted Applied Concepts Unleashed. "Ocean Yachts has had and still has a very successful relationship with Dave Martin who has been our designer for many years. But in addition to our usual line of Ocean Yachts, we decided to explore an entirely new realm. We wanted to accommodate our customers who wanted something different" says JIV. "So we created Makaira Yachts and our first model -- a semi-custom 64-footer and the flagship of the line -- answers that call."

JIV met Steve French at a fishing tournament in Stuart, Florida, and after some discussion, discovered that they shared many common interests in addition to boats. They hit it off immediately and a solid friendship blossomed. Leek discovered that French had a reputation for creativity, flexibility and thorough knowledge of infusion and other closed mold technologies from his work in the medical field. This would allow the Makaira brand to venture into the future boldly based on experience from both sides of the table.

*The Makaira custom yacht family is a venture by the Leeks to utilize the latest in 3D design and engineering to produce the highest level of production efficiency with custom performance.*

French and Leek embarked on a very collaborative effort, creating a different type of sportfishing yacht from a clean slate. The hull is a French WaveForm that was tank tested to over 50 knots and the design is composites throughout, including stringers, hull, superstructure, soles, bulkheads and walls, a completely rot free structure all tooled and CNC'd. The goal: "To provide the perfect blend of production efficiency and custom performance". French says is what JIV asked for.

So how has it turned out? "We couldn't be happier with the outcome of our first Makaira 64," says John Leek IV. "We both poured our hearts and souls into this project and the result exceeds our expectations."



#### **NEXT STEP FOR FRENCH-**

He introduced me to a new boat he's designed and had built to bring "Bring back the simpler days of fishing using all that we've learned for the last forty years" -- the Jäger 41 -- takes the classic day-boat concept into the 21st century. At 41 feet, the Jäger sports all the features of a larger yacht like the gigantic cockpit, but operates at a fraction of the cost.

Built with his partner David Carty, of Rebel Marine and designed with two clients in mind; the owner trading down to avoid hiring crew and spending a fortune and wanting to take the boat out whenever the mood strikes, and the smaller-boat owner who wants to trade up but can't really manage something larger and more expensive.

French says "I've found a common spirit in Mr. Carty a progressive with a deep respect for our heritage and a smart sense of practicality balanced with style. I look forward to building more beautiful boats for our customers with David."



“It is rare to find a successful designer who 1. has his ego in check and 2. that can build what he designs with his own hands” - David Carty.

*“The Jager 41’ is a yacht of the future, just unleash your mind and explore the benefits now” French*

French still has many productive years ahead of him. His grand vision? To design and build more progressive boats, under his own name- French Yachts. His

most recent projects are carrying him in that direction as his customers are demanding things that most boat builders either are not willing to do or don’t have the resources to produce. “There are plenty of boat builders, so I’m only going to set up shop if I can really do it right. I’ve spent the



last two years developing strategic alliances, but we’re not ready to break any news just yet” he smiles. “Its important to me that while I’m here I deliver lasting solutions with the talents I’ve been given. I’m encouraged that we have customers interested in progress. While we have certainly done some amazing things as boat builders, there is opportunity for healthy progress in our industry. We only need unleash our minds”. He concludes. I get the feeling that there is more going on than he lets on.

Despite recent global economic gloom, French has continued his journey designing and building the world's most advanced yachts. At the time of this writing, he is working to construct a composites facility along with a maritime museum and education park. You can keep tabs on the progress at [www.Frenchyachts.com](http://www.Frenchyachts.com)

Looking at the big picture, virtually every boat building company that has employed Applied Concepts

Unleashed has thrived and grown, despite their initial reservations to join him in his journey to the future. Today it is estimated there are over 1,000 custom and production boats that embody designs by Steve French. Given that he is in a solid stride today designing things we can’t talk about yet I think we can look forward to more exciting things from this great mind.

For more on Steve French and Applied Concepts go to [www.designyouryacht.com](http://www.designyouryacht.com)  
Keep tabs on the development of his new operation at [www.frenchyachts.com](http://www.frenchyachts.com)

Additional note: French’s research in composite technologies has lead to the new system known as AirTeak. For more see [www.Airteak.com](http://www.Airteak.com)

**--Dean Travis Clarke**