

# GOOD OLD BOAT™



presents

## Review Boats



## 25 - 27 footers

### Small keelboats to sail anywhere

Reviews of some of the first sailboats introduced during the fiberglass era:  
the early family cruisers and racers in the size range of 25 to 27 feet.

All articles were published in *Good Old Boat* magazine  
between September 1998 and November 2012.

# GOOD OLD BOAT



presents

## Review boats

Thank you for purchasing *Review Boats*, our 25- to 27-foot edition!

Starting alphabetically with the Albin Vega, at 27 feet, and ending with the Yamaha 25, there's something here for everyone! There's a Bristol, a Catalina, and an Ericson. We have an Island Packet, an O'Day, and a Pacific Seacraft.

When we started *Good Old Boat* magazine in 1998, the founding editors could have named most of the brands mentioned above . . . but not too many more. How many different kinds of sailboats could there be, anyway? *Very* many. Lots, as it turns out. We've learned much over the years as we've published review after review.

At one point, as increasing numbers of subscribers asked us to review their kinds of boats, our standard refrain became: "So many boats . . . so little time! Now, after 15 years, we're getting around to most of the brands although the manufacturers were very busy building their boats in 2- and 3-foot increments, several mark versions (indicating upgrades and modifications over the original designs) and sometimes in several configurations (with or without a centerboard, various rig arrangements, and interior layout alternatives).

Surely we have to cover each different and unique boat! After all, each variation has a following of passionate owners. With the able efforts of our reviewers, we're working toward that goal. In the meantime, we're offering the gems of our first 15 or so years.

This group of 25- to 27-footers is a wonderful collection of capable racers and small-family cruisers. Although today's manufacturers seldom build in this size range, preferring to make the bigger bucks that come with the sale of 40- and 50-footers, these wonderful boats last seemingly forever selling and re-selling as people start with a small budget, invest in their new hobby, maintain and upgrade their sailboats, and finally move along to the next size group when the family grows, the budget grows, or the wanderlust grows.

Buying one of these boats is a great way to get started. We hope you'll find this collection of reviews to be informative and helpful.

**All material contained in this file is copyrighted by *Good Old Boat* magazine. Please do not copy these articles to distribute to friends (or anyone else for that matter).** This is how we make our living . . . and you would like for us to stick around in the future so we can review more boats, wouldn't you?

Over the years, we've enjoyed editing and publishing these articles and being part of the dialogue that followed. We hope you'll enjoy reading these articles as much as we've enjoyed reviewing the boats for you.

The *Good Old Boat* crew

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# Albin Vega: mod

*The first in a series of reviews  
of small seaworthy sailboats  
from John Vigor's newest book,  
Twenty Small Sailboats to Take  
You Anywhere*

**Y**ou'd hardly guess by looking at one that the Albin Vega has earned herself a reputation for being an outstanding offshore cruiser. She's a modest-looking little fiberglass sloop, totally lacking the massive fittings, bowsprits, and laid teak decks that most people associate with real deep-sea boats. In fact, if you didn't know how tough she is, you might judge her to be rather frail. The slight reverse sheer gives her a humpbacked appearance from some angles (though not an unsightly one) but otherwise her general appearance is quite unremarkable.

Like so many of the world's seaworthy boats, the Albin Vega has Scandinavian origins. She was designed in Sweden in 1964 — the early days of fiberglass construction — by Per Brohäll, who obviously admired the long keel and skinny beam of the Folkboat. The Vega was given a short counter stern with an inboard rudder, however, instead of a transom and an outboard rudder, and her cabintop, raised in two sections, gave her more room below. Well over 3,000 Vegas were built in a production run that extended more than a decade, and thousands of them are now sailing all over the world.

Brohäll set out to design a boat that was light, fast, roomy, seaworthy, and relatively cheap. This was a seemingly impossible task because sailboat performance is the distilled essence of a series of compromises. What is seaworthy, for example, is not usually fast. What is roomy is not necessarily cheap. But Brohäll succeeded in producing one of those rare designs that exceeds most people's expectations in most areas. The one

obvious thing the Vega lacks, in comparison with more modern designs, is space down below. But perhaps the comparison is unfortunate because modern designs deliberately sacrifice ultimate seaworthiness for interior space. The understanding is that today's roomy coastal cruisers will never need to fall back on the resources of seaworthiness an ocean voyager requires. Per Brohäll never had to make that compromise. From the outset, he aimed for seaworthiness.

It's the Vega's comparatively narrow beam of exactly 8 feet 0 inches that makes for snugness down below, of course. Nevertheless, the accommodations are comfortable for two adults on a long trip, and perhaps even for two adults and two children on a shorter vacation trip.

## **Basic design**

The Vega has a shallow hull with narrow beam and fairly hard bilges. Her keel is long, but not full-length, running for only about half the waterline length, from about the mast to the after end of the cockpit well. While there is more than sufficient length for good tracking, especially downwind in the trades, this keel reduces the surface area (and therefore friction) of the "traditional" deep-sea keel and helps the Vega perform better in light air.

The rudder is attached to the aft end of the keel, but while this is a very strong way to support it, the rudder itself has revealed some weaknesses. There is no cutout in the rudder for the propeller, which, unusually, emerges from the deadwood under the counter but above the rudder. The hull is solid fiberglass, said by the builder to be 3/8-inch thick at the sheerline and 1-inch thick at the base of the keel, but the

**Editor's note:** *As this issue was going to press, we bought the rights to publish all the chapters to John Vigor's new book, Twenty Small Sailboats to Take You Anywhere. We did some serious content juggling to introduce the series with this issue. Although this isn't an alphabetically prioritized list, we decided to begin with the Albin Vega. Then we did a fast shuffle, contacting Vega owners from among our subscribers to request illustrations for the article: photos, brochures, line art. As you see, they came through for us, and we're grateful.*

**Now we're looking for the same from sailors of the Bristol Channel Cutter (scheduled for the May issue) and the Cal 20 (which will run in July).** *Bristol and Cal owners, let us know if you've got photos of interiors, your boats at the dock, and especially of your boats under sail; old brochures and manuals; line drawings; owners' comments; or resources (organizations or vendors) which might be helpful to other sailors with your boats. We will return all materials and savor the comments. We look forward to hearing from you!*



# lest, but tough

deck and cabintop are cored fiberglass for lightness. It has been reported that you can press in the cabin sides with your bare hands. Of course because a panel flexes, it doesn't necessarily mean that it is too weak, but continual flexing will eventually cause fatigue and cracks, so in a boat intended for long passages at sea, you'd need to stiffen it with internal stringers or bolt on a large plywood or acrylic storm cover outside.

The caulked, internal flanges of the hull and deck are bolted together with 5/16-inch stainless steel bolts every 5 inches, which makes for a reassuringly strong joint and few leaks. The sheerline, as mentioned above, is reversed slightly to improve headroom below. It is actually almost a straight line from stern to bow, but the eye increases the humpback effect because it is trained to see a concave sheer in that spot. The bows, therefore, look lower than usual for the size of the boat and appear to lack buoyancy, but there is no evidence that such is the case.

The low topsides cut down on wind resistance, which means the coachroof must protrude more to provide adequate headroom below. Brohäll resisted the temptation to create a high, unsightly superstructure that would accommodate a standing 6-footer anywhere below. Instead, he placed a low cabin trunk over the head and the aft end of the V-berth, and then stepped it up another story to give 5 feet 10 inches of headroom in the main saloon and galley. The result is a fairly large superstructure, but one that blends pleasantly with the hull and avoids boxiness. The cockpit is self-bailing and small enough not to cause concern about pooping, but big enough for two people not to get in each other's way on long trips.



*Sidney Rosen, who runs the American Vega Association, sent this photo of a Vega under sail. The photo's from 1991, and the boat is Norman Meissner's. See sidebar at the end of this article for more information about contacting the American Vega Association.*

Early Vegas were powered by gasoline engines, the 13-horsepower Albin or the 15-horsepower Volvo. Later models carried Volvo diesel engines, including the 10-horsepower MD6A (which was generally thought not to have sufficient power) and the 13-horsepower MD7A. But the really interesting thing about the Vega's power train was the Combi variable-pitch propeller, which was used without a transmission on the early boats. Even when transmissions were added at a later stage, the variable-pitch prop was retained. It was controlled by a single lever that changed the propeller pitch, from full astern to full ahead, without

the need for a clutch. When the boat was under sail, the prop could be feathered for least resistance. It was reportedly a very efficient, but complicated and expensive to repair, piece of machinery.

## **Accommodations**

The Vega has comfortable bunks for four, two 6-footers and two of 6 feet 6 inches, but it would be a mistake to plan on long ocean crossings with four adults. Two would be plenty. The accommodation layout is logical for a boat with a 23-foot waterline, starting with a chain locker up forward, followed by a V-berth and a toilet just forward of

the main bulkhead. The head faces a hanging locker on the other side of the gangway and can be closed off from the main cabin, but remains open to the V-berth.

Aft of the main bulkhead are transom berths to port and starboard,



the starboard one being 6 inches longer than the port one. The table between the berths fits into sockets in the cabin sole, so it can be yanked out and stowed away — or dropped into similar sockets in the cockpit for that sunset drinks-and-snacks session.

At the after end of the cabin, under the sliding hatch, the galley divides itself into two portions, one each side of the companionway steps/engine cover. The cooker lives on the port side, and a sink and icebox on the starboard side. Cubbyholes and lockers in the galley and the main cabin provide ample stowage space for gear and provisions for two people on extended voyages.

As usual in a boat of this size, there is no dedicated chart table, and the cabin table supplied with the boat is unlikely to be steady enough for serious navigation business in a seaway. But a removable or fold-down plywood table could be made easily enough to fit over one end of a berth or over the icebox/sink area.

All the deadlights are fixed in place with rubber gaskets, which means you can't open them, so it wouldn't be a bad idea to add a couple of Dorade ventilators, although the existing ventilation system works better than most. If you're heading for the tropics, you'll need all the ventilation you can get.



## The rig

The Vega's rig is entirely conventional and easily handled. This masthead sloop has single spreaders and two lower shrouds on each side. The mast and boom are aluminum, and neither is of excessive proportions, but the mast is stepped on deck, which brings problems in time

because few designers or builders ever manage to compensate adequately for the enormous downward thrust a mast produces. The best way to transfer that thrust is to carry the mast down to the keel, but on narrow-gutted boats like this one it gets in the way so much down below that most buyers won't tolerate it. When it comes time to make repairs, however, they may live to regret it. More on this later.

The main boom is quite short, yet the mainsheet traveler can still be placed aft of the rudder head, so the sheet is at the helmsman's fingertips. Single winches on the cockpit coamings can handle everything from the spitfire jib to a 150 percent genoa.

## Performance

Initially tender, the Vega stiffens up at moderate angles of heel, and despite her shallow draft she works to windward reasonably well. She is very handy indeed off the wind. A Vega called *Little My III* crossed the Atlantic from the Cape Verde Islands to Barbados in 14 days, 16 hours. Richard



*That's Mike and Cheryl Warren's boat, at top. The Warrens live in Ohio, but sail her in Texas. (One nice thing about these boats is you can move them from place to place as the mood strikes you . . . a novel concept for many keelboat sailors.) Notice the unusual cut of the bow pulpit. Timothy Gill has some interesting points to share about this concept in his sidebar at the end of this article. Gunnar Asker's boat, Wind Harmony, is the platform for feeding the ducks in the lower photo. Gunnar and family sail on Long Island Sound. Carl and Maria Asker are in the foreground; Gunnar's wife, Louise, is behind them. Carl is Gunnar's great nephew.*



Henderson, commenting on the trip in his book *Singlehanded Sailing* (International Marine), says: “She reportedly surfed in the trade winds at speeds up to 13 knots, yet was dry, comfortable, and easily managed. Her excellent downwind behavior might be attributed to her well-balanced hull with flattish run, modest displacement, and moderately long full keel.”

Her working sail area, while correctly proportioned for an ocean cruiser, is too modest to give her scintillating performance in light air, so it would be wise to carry a large nylon drifter and/or an asymmetrical cruising spinnaker if you’re not planning to motor through the doldrums.

In general she has a reputation for being extremely well behaved. She is easy to steer and stays under control even when hard pressed.

### Known weaknesses

Here’s what to watch for if you’re contemplating buying an Albin Vega:

- Weakness of the rudder. There seems to be a problem with the design and/or engineering of the rudder. John Neal, who sailed the Vega *Mahina* 14,000 miles in the South Pacific in the 1970s, lost his rudder while hove to in a storm. Check the fittings, particularly the heel fitting, and test the rudder for movement while the tiller is held firmly in place.
- Oilcanning of the decks or cabin sides. The former may indicate delamination due to saturation of the core, the latter lack of stiffening stringers.
- Lack of control in reverse gear. The unusual situation of the propeller, aft of the rudder, seems to create difficulties with steering the Vega when she’s in reverse gear. She will need to be moving astern at a fairly rapid clip before the rudder takes effect, and while she’s building up speed there’s no knowing where she might go. Probably it will depend on the direction of the wind — it often happens (not only to Vegas) that a boat going astern will weathercock downwind, that is, pivot from the propeller and point her bow downwind; nothing you can do will



***In top photo, Cheryl Warren enjoys the comforts of home below decks. Since this photo was taken, she’s recovered the cushions. The photo below is of the little doll house just purchased by Sam and Rachel Thompson. Named Kwan Yin, this Vega came complete with all the original manuals and an updated interior. In spring they will sail her along the New England coastline.***

prevent it. It’s just a question of experimenting and getting to know your boat. It’s not a serious flaw. Vegas don’t spend much of their lives in reverse gear.

- Compression of the deck and bulkhead beneath the mast. In *Log of the Mahina*, John Neal’s story of his adventures in a Vega in the South Pacific, he tells how he discovered

damage to the main load-bearing bulkhead. One of the two supports on the bulkhead had broken away and destroyed a 3/8-inch stainless steel bolt. The support had punched through the fiberglass cabin sole. Furthermore, the port side of the bulkhead had started a nasty warp at the top.



Check the overhead beams that transfer the thrust of the mast to the bulkhead supports. They need to be much stronger than many builders make them. Also check the glue and mechanical bonds between the supports and the bulkhead. And be sure that the massive downward load from the bulkhead is properly transferred from the fiberglass cabin sole to the hull of the boat.

### Owner's opinion

Tom Currier, a software engineer in Pembroke, N.H., got to know Albin Vegas well when he used to deliver them around the coast for his father, who had an Albin dealership. But he got to know them even better after buying his own Vegas. He owned two — *Resande* and *Skidbladnir* (Little Liferaft) — for a total of seven years.

He has owned other boats and sailed on many more, but his opinion after all those years of experience with the Albin Vega was very firm: “Out of any cruising boat I’ve ever owned, she has the best sailing characteristics. She’s a sweet boat, fast, and well balanced. She has no weather helm; you can always balance her with the

sails alone. She also points amazingly well.”

Tom said his Vegas felt stiff after an initial 10 or 15 degrees of heel, and didn’t need a reduction in sail area until the wind got over 20 knots. In 40-knot winds, with 12-foot seas, he found the Vega easy to handle under a storm jib and rolled-down main. “She just kept sailing,” he said. “She’s a very solid boat — though she was very wet, of course.”


The engines in his boats were a Westerbeke 13 and a Yanmar 9 diesel. He found that the Westerbeke was a bit bulky and difficult to get to. The Yanmar was smaller, lighter, and easier to maintain. “It was plenty powerful enough.”

Tom asserted that the variable-pitch propeller was very good when new — he loved it — but it wore out with age and was hard to get parts for. As people replaced the engines, they also replaced the variable-pitch setup with standard shafts and transmissions.

He didn’t think the cockpit was too big for safe deep-sea work. “I thought it was a perfect size, and its outstanding feature was the high

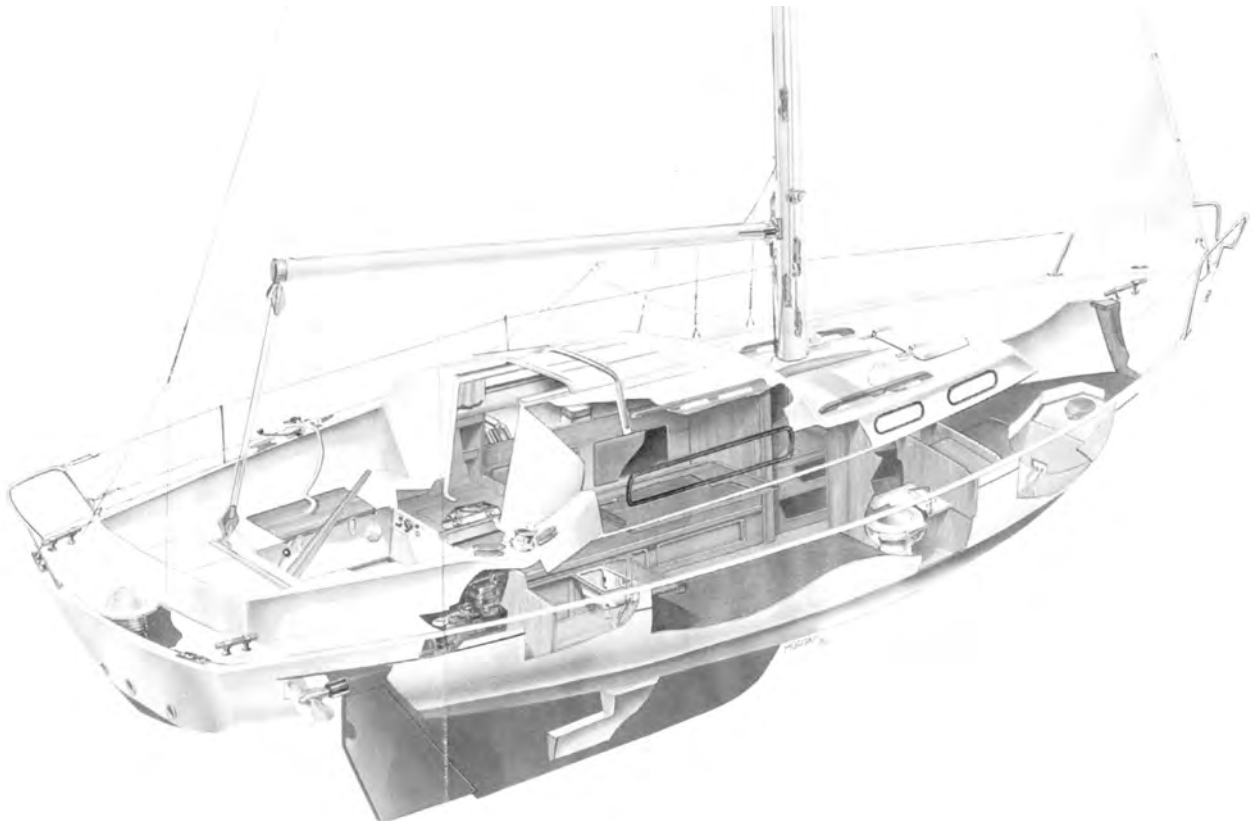
coamings — they kept things inside the boat. There were good drains, and if you plugged them up you could take a bath in the cockpit.”

Neither of the Vegas he owned ever had any problems with osmosis or delamination, and he never noticed any flexing of panels. “If somebody experienced oilcanning, it might have been the result of an inadequate repair job,” he surmised. As far as the mast compression problem goes, he felt the best solution was to fit a solid post from beneath the mast step to the keel.

“It’s fairly evident when this problem crops up,” he said. “I know some owners who have fitted compression posts and cured the problem. You can still get around the post. For extended ocean voyaging, he’d recommend complete system rebuilds for the electrical wiring and the rigging, both standing and running. “None of which is a very big deal,” he added. 

© John Vigor

*John’s new book, to be published by Paradise Cay (800-736-4509) later this year, will be available on Good Old Boat’s bookshelf.*



## Resources for Vegas

If you're the owner of an Albin Vega, and you haven't yet found the American Vega Association, they'll find you. You might as well give up and contact Sidney Rosen today. Sid was a founding member of the Vega One Design Chesapeake Association in the early 1970s. This group later grew to include sailors throughout the rest of North America.

Sidney Rosen  
10615 Whitman Circle  
Orlando, FL 32821  
407-352-9250  
SIDNOCK@aol.com

The organization has recently put up a webpage by Dave Pomerantz: <<http://www.targetsoft.com/vega>>. Sidney, who just turned 80 by the way, puts out the organization's monthly newsletter called, quite simply, the *Vega Newsletter*. More importantly, he's the link for owner-to-owner discussions.

## In comparison

- Safety-at-sea factor: 8 (Rated out of 10, with 10 being the safest).
- Speed rating: Fast off the wind. Once holder of the record for the fastest Atlantic crossing.
- Ocean comfort level: One or two adults in relative comfort; two adults and two kids in less comfort.

## In short

### Albin Vega 27

**Designer:** Per Brohäll (1964)

**LOA:** 27 feet 1 inch

**LWL:** 23 feet 0 inches

**Beam:** 8 feet 0 inches

**Draft:** 3 feet 10 inches

**Displacement:** 5,070 pounds

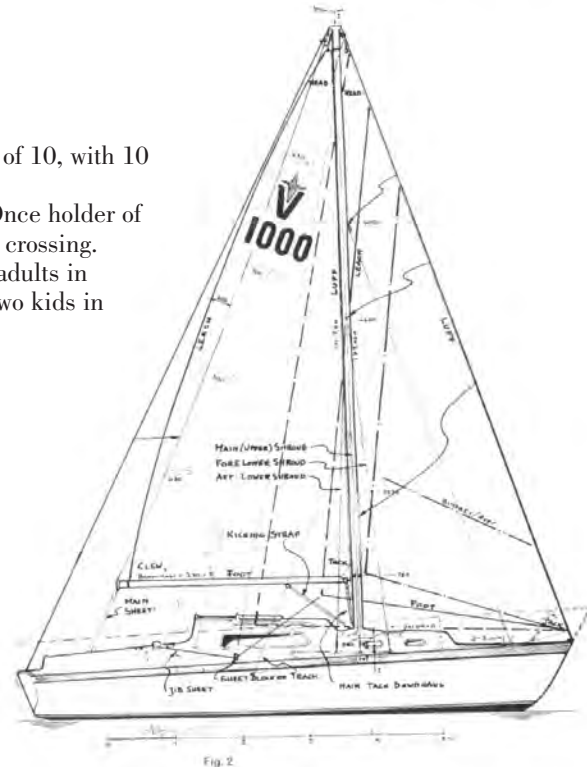
**Sail area:** 341 square feet

**Ballast:** 2,017 pounds

**Spars:** Aluminum

**Auxiliary:** Conventional gasoline or diesel with variable-pitch propeller.

**Designed as:** Fast, light, ocean cruiser with berths for four adults.



# One owner's comments

**Editor's note:** When we contacted Timothy Gill with our request for information on the Vega, he said, "You have struck the jackpot." He told us he "bought a time capsule from 30 years ago" when he purchased Kelva. She had previously had only one owner, and all original brochures and manuals came with the sale. The boat was in original condition inside and out and only had 247 nautical miles on the log and 14 hours on the original Albin gas engine. Some of Timothy's comments are from a letter which accompanied the drawings which we reproduce here:

"There are a couple of facts concerning the Vega that I thought may be of interest to your readers. One being the strange bow pulpit configuration. A lot of people would believe that it is made as such to accommodate the mast when lowered; but actually, being a Swedish boat, it was designed to accommodate the rugged coastline of the North Sea in Sweden when mooring bow to the coastline. It's actually a step-through for this purpose.

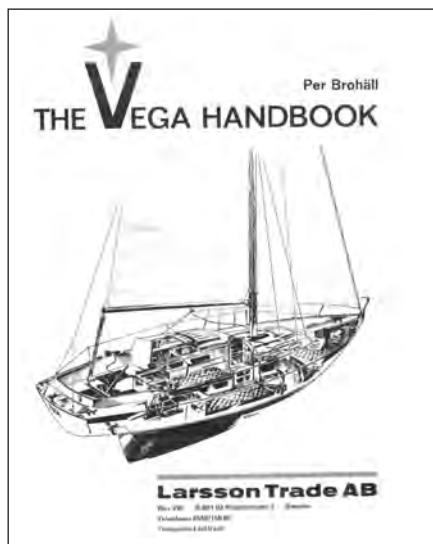
"Another fact that I thought was really interesting is the offshore capability of the Vega. Numerous ocean crossings have been made, including of course John Neal's South Pacific voyage and the Atlantic Circle voyage done by Jonny Birkelund in 1997. Birkelund's voyage was from Norway down the west coast of Europe to the Canaries then

south across the Atlantic to the Caribbean and back up the east coast of the U.S. and across the North Atlantic to Norway. All the miles were done single-handed with very little difficulty.

"All this speaks for the strength and integrity of the Vega and its hull. Larsson Marine took great care in the layup of its hulls. The fiberglass was used in a translucent fashion so the builders could actually see through it and be assured that there were no voids in the layup.

"(On my boat) the 'dreaded' Combi-Unit has worked flawlessly. It combines the throttle and the propeller pitch into one function, which works wonderfully when picking up a mooring. The boat is a bit tender. However it stiffens up nicely at 15 degrees of heel. It is also quite a dry boat, even in rough conditions, partially due to high coamings in the cockpit. All in all, the Vega is affordable enough to be a great starter boat, but tough enough to take the oceans. It's a boat that I know I won't soon outgrow."

*Timothy Gill*



# Long hull, lovely

There are some people whose artistic sensibilities are offended by the size of the Bristol 27's cabintop. They wonder how a designer with the flair and talent of Carl Alberg could have put such a lumpy top on such a sweet hull. The answer is very simple. He did it because the public wanted it. It provides what everybody wants, with the possible exception of the aesthetically oversensitive: standing headroom below.

While it's true that a lower, more streamlined coachroof would have made this boat a spectacular looker, it could only have been done at the cost of comfort and bad backs. Bristol Yachts quite rightly figured that the great majority of the boating public is not sensitive to minor artistic transgressions, so they built it the way Alberg designed it. And in the end it proved to be a great success — more than 400 of these robust little cruisers were created between 1966 and 1978.

To tell the truth, you quickly get used to the look of that cabintop and tell yourself it's not so bad after all. It begins to look "traditional," like the rest of the boat, and in any case, as Francis Bacon assured us, "There is no excellent beauty that hath not some strangeness in the proportion."

You can, if you want, deceive the eye with painted color schemes that will lessen the apparent height of the cabinsides, but few people have bothered.

The Bristol 27 is a typical product of its era, the early days of fiberglass construction. She has a long, skinny hull with lovely overhangs. She's made ruggedly to perform well in heavy weather, and her basic seaworthiness means she's fit to cross oceans. And if you're working on a tight budget, the price is right.

### Basic design

As was the fashion in the 1960s, the Bristol 27 has a traditional keel, well cut away forward for better maneuverability and safer tracking under a downwind rig.

Her ballast ratio of nearly 40 percent and the position of the encapsulated lead, much of it about 4 feet below the waterline, gives her a large positive range of stability. If she should be capsized by a plunging breaker in a bad storm, she'd bring herself upright again very quickly.

But her narrow beam (actually a factor that contributes to her seaworthiness) dictates that the righting moments of the keel and her form stability will not come into play until she has heeled over some 15 degrees or so.

This has led armchair critics to dub her "tender," as if tender were a pejorative term. In fact, there is nothing dangerous or unseaworthy about initial tenderness, as long as it disappears at the right time, which it does on the Bristol 27.

*Frederick Corey's Bristol 27, Watercolors, is a thing of beauty even when perched on a cradle. Her large cockpit marks her as a Weekender version. For more from Frederick about his boat, see Page 39.*



*by John Vigor*



# overhangs



After 15 or 20 degrees, she stiffens up and stubbornly refuses to heel any more, unlike some of today's beamy boats, which seem to want to keep on rolling over forever.

The hull is solid fiberglass, laid up by hand, largely of woven roving, which was then the "strongest material available," according to Bristol Yachts' sales brochure.

The deck, cockpit, and that cabintop were integrally molded and mechanically bonded to the hull molding. Her graceful counter stern provides buoyancy and good stowage space in a lazarette behind the tiller.

The large efficient rudder hangs off the aft end of the keel, where it is well protected from floating debris and crab-pot lines.

Her 6-foot 2-inch-long self-bailing cockpit is well above the waterline and is provided with 1 ½-inch drains. Early boats were provided with a solid bridgedeck at the forward end of the cockpit to prevent water from cascading below if a large wave filled it. For some reason, this bridgedeck disappeared on later models and a low sill was substituted — not a good idea on an ocean-going boat. You can achieve the same effect, of course, by keeping the lower dropboard in place in the companionway opening, but human nature being what it is, it's safer to have a permanent barrier between the accommodations and a cockpit full of water.

The standard boat came with a well for an outboard motor in the aft lazarette, and an inboard engine beneath the companionway was an option. When they found that most buyers went for the option, Bristol Yachts filled in the well and turned the space over to stowage. While outboard engines work well in calm water, they hardly work at all on this type of boat in choppy seas (when you really need their help) because the propeller is out of the water so much of the time.

The inboard engine most commonly fitted at first was the popular 30-hp Universal Atomic 4 — far too powerful for the job, but good and compact. Other owners opted for a reliable diesel, the Westerbeke Pilot 10.

Three models of the Bristol 27 were produced: the

Standard, the Dinette, and the Weekender. The first two were cruising designs, fit for deepsea work, but the third was, as its name implies, a sort of picnicking, daysailing, short-term-camping type of boat with an 8-foot cockpit and a consequent shortage of space below. You could make the Weekender fit for sea, but it would hardly be worth the money and effort, considering how cramped the accommodations would be.

The Bristol 27 is a design fit for heavy weather. She should heave to well and lie ahull in comparative safety.

### Accommodations

The Standard model is thoroughly traditional below, with 6-foot 6-inch V-berths up forward and a 20-gallon water tank below them, together with a seat/locker and stowage cubbyholes. Overhead there is an opening hatch for light and ventilation.

Next comes a small, but private, head and a linen locker to port. To starboard, opposite the head, there's the usual wardrobe and shelf.

The main saloon comprises two 6-foot 4-inch transom berths, one either side of the central gangway, and a galley in two halves, either side of the companionway steps. A two-burner alcohol stove lies to port, alongside a generously-sized stainless steel sink placed inboard for good drainage. A large icebox that drains overboard lies to starboard.

Headroom is 5 feet 10 inches beneath the overhead liner in the main cabin — courtesy of the prominent cabintop. There is unlimited headroom if you stand at the foot of the companionway steps with the sliding hatch open. Four fixed ports admit light to the living area and, while they are not excessively large, it wouldn't be a bad idea to make plywood or acrylic storm covers for them that could be fixed in place in really bad weather.

The more popular Dinette model is provided with a table as standard equipment. The dinette seats four on three sides, and converts into a double bed. The galley then gets its act together in one piece along the starboard side, and a quarterberth begins where the galley ends. Otherwise, the accommodation plan is the same as that of the Standard model.



***Lani Evans' Vigilant, a Standard-model 1967 Bristol 27 waits at the dock in Bristol ready for delivery to her home port of Hull, Mass.***



## The rig

Here we have yet another deck-stepped mast, but this time the downward thrust is taken by a substantial bulkhead separating the forward cabin from the head compartment.

As was usual in her heyday, the Bristol 27 has a relatively large mainsail and smaller foresails than are now common. She is a masthead sloop with anodized aluminum spars. The original boats were supplied with roller-reefing on the main boom, which by now should have been converted to jiffy reefing for improved speed and better sail shape.

Wire halyards with Dacron tails were originally supplied for the mainsail and foresail. These, too, should have been replaced by now by low-stretch Dacron halyards. With any luck, the masthead sheaves will have been changed, too, to accommodate the greater diameter of the line.

This is a good cruising rig, though that big mainsail will call for fairly frequent reefing. A third row of reef points, in lieu of a dedicated storm trysail, would be an excellent addition.

Singlehanding her should be easy, with tiller, mainsheet, and jib-sheet winches all within easy reach.

## Performance

The original Bristol Yachts brochure claimed the 27 was fast. But then, they also claimed she was roomy below. You can draw your own conclusions.

At the same time, she's no dog. She has that average sort of performance that makes her pass everything in sight when you're concentrating really hard, and fall behind when your attention wanders seriously.

She carries slight weather helm, which is fine. Weather helm is a good thing in small doses. It helps suck a boat to windward on the beat, and it means she'll round up and wait for you if you fall overboard. But if you find yourself with the tiller up under your chin in a breeze, it's time to reef the mainsail followed by a smaller jib or some rolls in the furling genoa.

Owners like to refer to the Bristol 27 as "nimble," meaning that she has her wits about her, even if she's not equipped with afterburners, and that she tacks and jibes quickly and precisely.

In short, there's nothing wrong with her performance, and if you give her a chance to show you what she can do on an ocean passage, she might surprise you.

Under power, it's a question of what engine you're carrying. Any outboard is likely to be unsatisfactory in choppy seas. Any inboard is likely to be fine if it's 10 horsepower or more. And being so nimble and sailing as well as she does, you could easily persuade her to sail around the world without

an engine. Many other boats have done it in the past, and many are still doing it. That extra space, coupled with the lack of a fuel tank, propeller, and all the through-hull holes and paraphernalia associated with an engine, could be a blessing.

## Known weaknesses

Here are some points to ponder if you're thinking of buying an old Bristol 27 for long-distance voyaging:

- Ignore the scaremongers who tell you she's too tender. Indeed, she does exhibit initial tenderness, but it's not a bad thing, as we mentioned earlier. It's a safety feature that some of today's beamy coastal cruisers badly need.
- Don't choose an outboard engine model.
- There have been reports of leaks in the hull-deck joint. Probably the caulking is getting old and tired. Get

out the hose and squirt the joint from the outside. Check inside with a flashlight for leaks. Mark the places and then get out the caulking gun.

- Get rid of the main boom roller reefing system and install slab reefing. It's faster, and better for the sail.
- There's not much through ventilation. A Dorade box or two in the right places would help a lot, especially in the tropics.

## Owner's opinion

For four years, Christopher Gross, of Centerport, Long Island, New York, sailed a Standard Bristol 27 on Long Island Sound, where a strong northeasterly or southwesterly sets up a short, nasty chop.

She was a 1966 model that he sailed with his wife, Barbara, and two children, and although he now sails a Ranger 33, he still has a fondness for the old Bristol that nursed him and his family through a storm or two.

She was tender, he recalls, but never seemed to heel more than 30 degrees. He learned to reef the mainsail promptly when the wind rose, and it made "all the difference" in the way she handled. As the wind piped up, she would start to experience heavy weather helm, but one reef in the main made her handy and docile again. "She came with roller reefing on the main," Gross recalls, "but



**David Berke's 1968 Bristol 27, Second Wind, sails Peconic and Gartiners bays from her berth in Southold, N.Y.**



it didn't work well because the boltrope kept fouling the gooseneck. When I got a new mainsail, I had two reef points put in it and used jiffy reefing. It was much easier."

One day, in the North Fork, the Grosses got caught in a northeaster. "We were fully exposed, and the seas built amazingly fast," he said. "We double-reefed the main and kept up the working jib on a broad reach for a while, then we turned downwind to run for shelter.

"There were huge waves towering over the transom. Our wooden pram dinghy was surfing down the waves and threatening to ram the transom. It was survival sailing. We made sure the kids were wearing lifejackets. The jib got wrapped around the forestay and ripped, but the boat handled OK, and we gradually worked her into protected water, where she was fine."

The one time she didn't handle so well was in a 30-knot southwesterly blowing on the nose. "We were going into waves about 6 feet high and of very short duration. We were pounding and hobbyhorsing. As soon as we'd get going she'd be stopped dead by another wave and fall off. We couldn't make any progress to windward."

Eventually, Christopher was forced to turn on the motor. He was hesitant at first, because his power came from a 9.9-hp longshaft Evinrude outboard housed in a well under the aft lazarette. "I was afraid the propeller would keep coming out of the water," he said, "and in fact it did. But even so, it did the trick." He was able to forge ahead and find shelter.

On the whole, he found the Bristol 27 reasonably fast and comfortable — "Actually quite quick on a beam reach" — except when she was pounding into short head seas. "We and the kids took her all over the Sound, as far as Bristol, Rhode Island, and she sailed and handled very nicely. Although she was quick to heel, she felt stable. You never felt you were in any kind of danger."

This boat had no hull/deck leaks, nor did she experience any mast-compression problem. "She was seaworthy and



**Vigilant sails out of Boston Harbor. This summer she cruised to Penobscot Bay in Maine taking the offshore route.**



well-constructed. There was really thick glass where I put a knotmeter in," Christopher says.

The cockpit, he felt, would be a bit large for safety offshore, and would need to be partially filled in. And although his 27 had a bridge deck to prevent a cockpit full of water flooding down below, she also had a deck-opening ice box. It was meant to be convenient for grabbing an iced drink while you were on deck, "but it needs to be fixed closed or glassed over for sea work," Christopher notes. "Additional cockpit drains would also be a good idea. And also, you'd need to carry more drinking water — the standard tank was very small." Finally, if you're planning to cross an ocean in a Bristol 27, go for the inboard engine, not the outboard, he advises.

His boat had a wooden rudder that used to shrink when she was hauled out for the winter. "It developed big gaps between the boards, and it looked horrible, so I caulked it up. Then, when she got back in the water again the wood swelled up and all the caulking came out. I learned not to do that again."

Christopher says that some later-model Bristol 27s had higher cabintops than his. "That's because they started using iron ballast instead of lead, and had to raise the cabin sole to accommodate the greater volume of iron. So they also had to raise


the cabintop to maintain the standing headroom."

He says the ballast was iron filings. "If it got wet it rusted, expanded, and made a real mess." One person he knew vacuumed out the iron filings and had a proper lead keel made to fit in the hull.

So watch out for iron ballast. It doesn't necessarily disqualify a Bristol

27 from sea service, but if you can find a boat with a lead keel and a lower profile, you'll probably be happier.

## Conclusion

She's cramped down below, but she's ruggedly built and likely to be around for a long time. There's nothing very fancy about the Bristol 27, but when it comes to value for money she's in the top league. She sold originally for about \$13,000. By 1976 the price had risen to more than \$18,000. You should be able to find a mid-1960s model for about \$12,000 to \$15,000 depending on condition. Not a bad price for an ocean-going yacht. 

*This and other reviews are reprinted from John Vigor's book, *Twenty Small Sailboats to Take You Anywhere*, available on the *Good Old Bookshelf*. See Page 65.*



# She hangs tough

“Unfortunately,” writes Frederick Corey, “there are three versions of the popular B27. Not wanting to get outdone by the more popular Cruising (Standard) and Dinette editions, I find I need to stand up for the Weekenders of the world.

Yes, yes, I admit it. We’re the stepsisters of the triad (but so was Cinderella). And only a few Weekenders were built.

Take in the lovely lines! Alberg capitulated to commerce when he created a Cruiser with headroom, but penned his own dreams with the Weekender. Do you think it coincidence that there’s such praise for the Alerion 28? The Alerion hails from Newport, and this comes classic from Bristol, oh but a few headlands apart.

Our Weekender is *Watercolors* (shown on Page 34), which we sail on Duxbury Bay. Her spacious (8-foot 5-inch) cockpit makes daysailing a pleasure. The sleepers stretch out to leeward, the sailors sit to windward, and the kids hang out on the foredeck.

We have a head if we need it, a sink when we want it, and four good, long bunks below. Her 43-percent ballast ratio and a hull that slices through waves assures us of easy, confident passages on any coastal cruise. Although she’s initially tender, her rail stays dry, and as Clint Pearson once put it, ‘She hangs tough.’ ”



## The Bristol 27

### In short

**Designer:** Carl Alberg (1965)

**LOA:** 27 feet 2 inches

**LWL:** 19 feet 9 inches

**Beam:** 8 feet 0 inches

**Draft:** 4 feet 0 inches

**Displacement:** 6,600 pounds

**Sail area:** 340 square feet

**Ballast:** 2,575 pounds

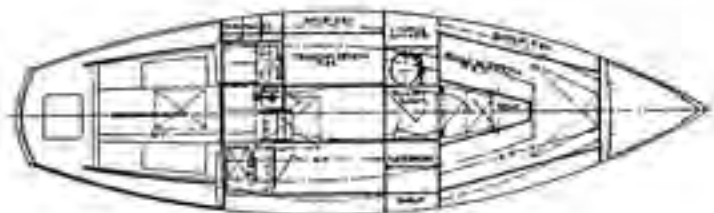
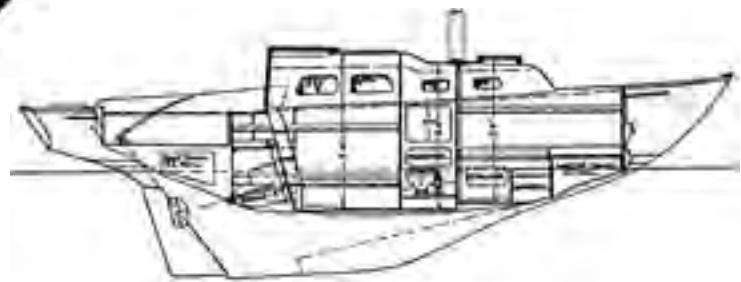
**Spars:** Anodized aluminum

**Auxiliary:** Outboard in well or inboard gasoline or diesel

**Designed as:** Seaworthy cruiser with club racing capabilities

### In comparison

- **Safety-at-sea factor:** 7 (Rated out of 10, with 10 being the safest.)
- **Speed rating:** Not bad for a cruiser. She has an average PHRF rating of 234, about the same as the nippy little Santana 22 club racer/weekender.
- **Ocean comfort level:** All right for one or two adults; two adults and two kids in less comfort.



## Resources

### Bristol (Chesapeake Bristol Club)

Art Bretapelle  
1940 Rockingham St.  
McLean, VA 22101

### Bristol Discussion List

<<http://members.sailnet.com/resources/links/list/index-new.cfm?id=bristol>>

### Bristol Owners' Association

Douglas Axtell  
Bristol32@aol.com  
<<http://members.aol.com/bristolyht/>>

# Cal 2-27

**A solid,  
well-behaved  
mid-'70s  
cruiser/club racer**

by Gregg Nestor



**Designer Bill Lapworth had an eye for a sweet sheerline, which Ken and Vern Cline's Cal 2-27, *Miss Ruby Louise*, shows off proudly.**

**A**round 1956, Jack Jensen started one of this country's most successful fiberglass boat-building companies. Located in Costa Mesa, California, which in the 1960s and 1970s would become the Mecca of fiberglass boatbuilders, Jensen Marine brought fast, comfortable, ocean-going sailboats to the American working class.

At first, Jensen built his boats outside, in an open field. The near-perfect Southern California climate lent itself nicely to construction outdoors and the company soon earned the nickname "backyard boats."

Jensen Marine's meteoric rise began with the introduction of the California 24, designed by C. William "Bill" Lapworth. This flat-bottomed centerboarder seemed to blow the doors off most of the competition. Originally named for Jensen's home

state of California, the name was shortened to "Cal." It stuck, and eventually Jensen Marine and Cal yachts became synonymous.

The Jensen-Lapworth collaboration lasted many years. In fact, Bill Lapworth designed all of Jensen's boats. These ranged from the flush-decked Cal 20 to the Cal Cruising 46. Included in this selection were three different 27-foot models, each of them distinct although all from the same drawing board.

The company was sold to Bangor Punta in 1973, which moved it first to Florida and then to Massachusetts. The doors closed in 1987.

## **Design evolution**

The first Cal 27, launched in 1970, was the smallest of the three, having a 9-foot beam, a convertible pop-top, and a displacement of 5,400 pounds.

Introduced in 1974, the Cal 2-27 sported a 9-foot 3-inch beam, standing headroom, and more creature comforts, including a decent galley with an icebox and an alcohol stove. The last of the Cal 27s was the Mark III, often referred to as the Cal 3-27. It was launched in 1983. Compared to the Cal 2-27, the Cal 3-27 was narrower, 1,500 pounds lighter, had a longer waterline and a deeper fin keel, and carried less sail area.

Unlike its sister 27s, which had relatively flat underbodies, the Cal 2-27 was designed with a beamier and fuller hull. With a displacement of 6,700 pounds, its displacement/length ratio increased from 218 to 278, while its sail area/displacement ratio dropped from 18.2 to 16.8. Combining these elements with a beam 3 inches greater and a waterline 3 inches shorter, the Cal 2-27 was well situated in the "family sailing" category.



Even with its conservative sail plan, the boat still performed well enough to appeal to the club racer. In fact, the Cal 2-27 was the major competitor to the Catalina 27. Under PHRF, the largest Cal 2-27 fleet rates 198, while the Catalina 27 rates from 204 to 219, depending on fleet.

Other design elements include a deck-stepped mast, fin keel, and spade rudder. In common with many of Bill Lapworth's designs of that period, the rudder on the Cal 2-27 is partially supported by a vestigial skeg.

### Construction

The hull and keel of the Cal 2-27 were molded with solid hand-laid fiberglass as a single unit. A 3,100-pound lead casting was lowered into the keel and encapsulated with additional fiberglass and polyester resin. The deck is of sandwich construction with a core of marine plywood, which adds strength without adding unnecessary weight. The hull-to-deck joint is sealed with adhesive putty, glassed over on the inside, and covered on the outside with a two-piece rubrail of vinyl and fiberglass.

In the interior, a partial fiberglass pan comprises the sole and various hull stiffeners, including the support structure for the compression post under the mast. The plywood-and-teak bulkheads are bonded to the hull and to the

**“The forward cabin is truly a mini-stateroom, owing to the fact that it incorporates the head compartment.”**

deck, stiffening the boat significantly. Overhead, the headliner is padded vinyl in the saloon and fiberglass forward of the main bulkhead. All the exposed surfaces of the hull are covered with teak except outboard of the V-berth, where the liner is carpeting.

The vinyl headliner allows for easy access to deck fittings. On our review boat, the stanchions and pulpits are mounted with backing plates; however, most of the other deck hardware — cleats, winches, and genoa tracks — lack such reinforcement. The stainless-steel chainplates are quite impressive and are fastened to the bulkheads with 14 bolts each.

### Deck features

The combination of a turtle-shell-shaped coachroof, the lack of an anchor locker, and mooring cleats mounted well outboard results in a large, obstruction-free foredeck. The two-tone deck is easy on the eyes and the molded-in non-skid and toerail make for sure footing. For added on-deck security, there's a bow pulpit, dual lifelines, and four teak handrails.

The sidedecks are 14 inches wide and the cabintop, aside from the handrails and the forward hatch, is free from clutter. There is no sea hood. Exterior wood trim is limited to the handrails, the companionway hatchboards, and the companionway slides.

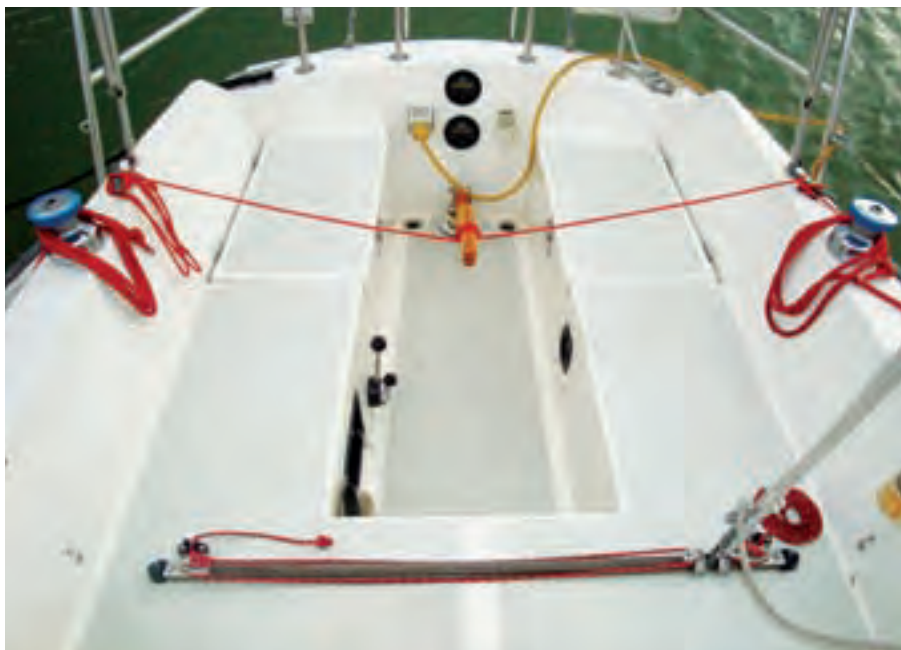
The cockpit is a generous 6 feet 6 inches long, is surrounded by 12-inch high coamings, and has a substantial bridge deck forward. The coamings are properly angled to give good back support and the footwell is narrow enough to offer solid foot bracing. It drains through a pair of 2-inch scuppers. Beneath each of the cockpit seats is a cavernous locker offering access to the stuffing box, the engine, and the batteries. A stern pulpit with an integral centerline swim ladder encloses the aft end of the cockpit.

### Accommodations

Our review boat *Miss Ruby Louise*, a 1980 Cal 2-27 owned by Ken and Vern Cline, is an excellent example of the major interior improvements found in the 1974 and later models. The interior is quite roomy, and attractive teak woodwork and joinerwork abound.

The forward cabin is truly a mini-stateroom, owing to the fact that it incorporates the head compartment. As such, it is much less claustrophobic than cabins found in other boats of similar size. Separating the V-berth from the head compartment is a partial bulkhead, with a wooden “basket weave” accordion door that provides a degree of privacy. The V-berth measures 6 feet 4 inches deep by 6 feet wide and has a generous 44 inches of sitting headroom. At its foot, a solid teak door closes off a small locker that could easily be converted to a chain locker with the addition of a deck pipe. Above and outboard are shelves with teak sea

**Tiller steering was standard on the Cal 2-27. The mainsheet traveler is mounted on the bridge deck. This is convenient to the helm but can obstruct access to the companionway.**





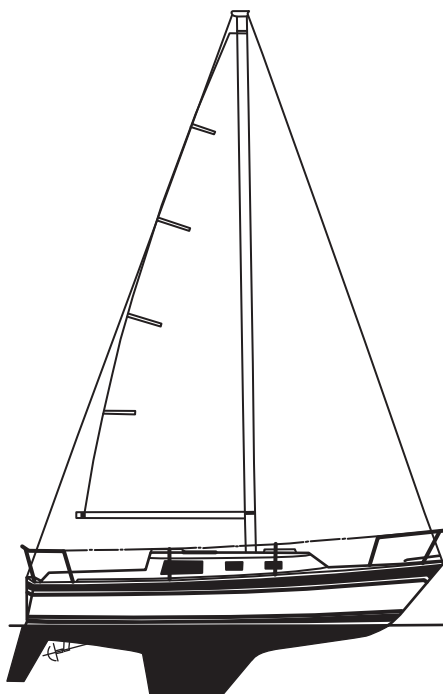
The galley, at left, extends athwartships under the bridge deck, so one of the steps used when entering or leaving the cabin is in the middle of the counter. In spite of this, it's an efficient use of space in a small boat. Most Cal boats have fiberglass pans or inner liners that form the sole and berth flats and include an athwartships beam that supports the mast's compression post. The interior is finished in teak-veneer plywood.

rails, and beneath are storage bins and the 20-gallon potable-water tank.

On the port side of the head compartment is the forward-facing toilet and a teak vanity featuring a white plastic-laminate top, stainless-steel basin with manual cold water, and several stowage spaces. Directly across from the vanity is a hanging locker and a large stowage alcove or sail bin. A pair of deck prisms, a translucent fiberglass overhead hatch, and a pair of opening portlights provide excellent illumination and ventilation.

A teak-veneered bulkhead and teak door separate the forward suite from the saloon. The solid-teak compression post is incorporated into the bulkhead and cleverly performs double duty: it provides support for the deck-stepped mast and serves as the jamb for the teak-paneled door. Mounted to the bulkhead is a drop-down table, behind which are three shelves. The two-position marine-plywood table is veneered with teak on one side and faced with a white plastic laminate on the other.

Opposing settees take up the bulk of the saloon. The port settee measures 6 feet 4 inches. On the starboard side, a foot cubby extends forward through the main bulkhead to make up the length, for sleeping purposes, taken up by the galley at the aft end. The port settee converts to a double. Both settees are made up of three cushions, an arrangement that allows for easy access underneath. Since much of the area beneath the port settee is taken up



## Cal 2-27

**Designer:** Bill Lapworth  
**LOA:** 26 feet 7 inches  
**LWL:** 22 feet 1 inch  
**Beam:** 9 feet 3 inches  
**Draft:** 4 feet 3 inches  
**Displacement:** 6,700 pounds  
**Ballast:** 3,100 pounds  
**Sail area:** 374 square feet  
**Disp./LWL ratio:** 278  
**SA/Disp. ratio:** 16.8  
**Fuel:** 15 gallons  
**Water:** 20 gallons

with a bladder holding tank (possibly Bangor Punta's easy answer to the Clean Water Act of 1972), most of the saloon's stowage is located under the starboard settee. Behind each settee is a teak-fiddled bookshelf and above, a pair of teak grabrails.

The galley is an athwartships L-shaped affair. While its cabinetry is teak, its work surface is plastic laminate with a wood-grain pattern. There's a dual cooktop that combines pressurized-alcohol and 110-volt-electric burners (which the Clines think was a factory option), a single stainless-steel sink with manual cold water, and a 3-cubic-foot icebox that can handle about 60 pounds of ice. Other features include a set of three drawers, a dry stowage bin, a pair of shelves, a dish rack, a utensil bin, and a condiment rack. For entertaining, there's even a dedicated liquor locker and crystal cabinet with a leaded-glass door.

While this arrangement may sound inviting, using the galley can be awkward. Crewmembers will step on the counter when passing through the companionway. This cuts down on counter space for food preparation. Obviously, any companionway traffic will interfere with the cook. Also, because the icebox and dry-stowage bin are somewhat recessed beneath the bridge deck, viewing their contents involves some bodily contortion.

Besides the companionway opening, four portlights (a pair of large fixed ports and a smaller pair that open),

provide the saloon with light and cross-ventilation. Headroom is a comfortable 6 feet 2 inches.

### Rigging

The Cal 2-27 is rigged as a masthead sloop, with a sail area of 374 square feet. Standing rigging consists of a pair of cap shrouds, single airfoil spreaders, a pair of lowers, a forestay, and a split backstay. The chainplates are inboard and securely mounted to the forward bulkhead.

Sail controls include a pair of Bariant #10 halyard winches mounted on the mast and a pair of Bariant #8 two-speed primaries positioned on the cockpit coamings. The headsail sheets are led aft through cars on outboard genoa tracks. The mainsail is sheeted mid-boom and affixed to a traveler mounted on the bridge deck. Other controls include a vang and two reef points with jiffy reefing. Tiller steering was standard.

### Performance

The Cal 2-27 is a fairly stiff boat and behaves well in all but the most severe conditions. It'll heel to about 20 degrees and then settle right in. Both upwind and off-the-wind performance are above average. When the wind begins to freshen, it's time to reef or weather helm may become a problem.

“The Cal 2-27 is well mannered and possesses sufficient room for a cruising couple or a small family.”

The original auxiliary was the ubiquitous Atomic 4, with the single-cylinder 12-hp Farymann diesel available as an option. Later engines included the MB10A Volvo diesel and the Universal 5411 diesel. A very few boats were even fitted with outboards — not the best option.

*Miss Ruby Louise* is a late-model 2-27 and is fitted with the 2-cylinder, 11-hp Universal diesel. While this power plant moves the boat along nicely under most conditions, the boat is a bit underpowered when trying to punch through rough seas. Fuel is contained in a 15-gallon tank mounted directly aft of the engine. The controls for the engine are located on the starboard side of the cockpit, low in the footwell. Access to the engine is fair.

### What to look out for

While the overall design, construction, and finish of the Cal 2-27 can be considered above average, there are a few detractions. None of them appear to be major problems, however, and most can be easily corrected. They include

such things as missing backing plates, leaking ports, leaking chainplates, gate valves on through-hulls, gelcoat crazing, and the lack of a convenient stowage system for an anchor rode.

### Conclusion

Overall, the Cal 2-27 is well mannered and possesses sufficient room for a cruising couple or a small family. Its design, construction, and finish are above average. When contemplating the purchase of a Cal 2-27, age and condition are everything. Consider paying \$9,000 to \$15,000 for a nice one. By the way, when introduced, a bare Cal 2-27 listed for less than \$12,000. *▲*

*Gregg Nestor is a contributing editor with Good Old Boat. Having recently sold both their O'day 222 and their Pearson 28-2, Gregg and his wife, Joyce, find themselves boatless. They are currently searching for that perfect good old boat. Gregg's third book, The Trailer Sailer Owner's Manual: Buy-Outfit-Trail-Maintain, was released earlier this year by Paradise Cay Publications.*



Leaded glass standard on a production boat? You bet! It's in the door to the liquor and crystal cabinet, at left. When viewed from the saloon, the forward cabin with its V-berth appears unusually spacious, center. This is because of the way the head compartment, at right, is included as part of its area. When guests are aboard, an accordion door offers privacy between the V-berth and the head.





THE IMPORTANT THING TO remember about this boat is the “D” behind her name. There are about 26 different Cape Dory yachts, power and sail, ranging from the original Cape Dory 10 to the Cape Dory 45. There are, in addition, two Cape Dory 25s, but only one is the Cape Dory 25D. And she is quite different from the Cape Dory 25 without the “D” — which, incidentally, stands for diesel.

The very name Cape Dory conjures up images of traditional designs, high-quality building, and extraordinary customer loyalty. In short, the 25D is a cult boat, with active owners’ associations, sites on the Web, and high resale value.

That should be “comparatively high resale value,” of course, because as ocean cruisers go, the 25D is not expensive. On the East Coast and Gulf Coast, where most of them are, you can expect to pay between \$12,000 and \$15,000 for one.

She is a pedigreed design — an Alberg, like almost all the Cape Dory line — but she doesn’t have the usual skinny hull of his older boats. She has a beam of 8 feet on a waterline of 19 feet, a reasonably generous modern proportion, and it shows in her interior. Down below, she is probably one of the most functional mini-cruisers ever designed for two people.

She is in no way an updated Cape Dory 25, which was designed by George Stadel and originally produced by Allied as the Greenwich 24. Andrew Vavolotis, owner of Cape Dory Yachts, bought the tooling and redesigned the boat, relaunching her as the Cape Dory 25 in 1973.

And then, in the fall of 1981, the Cape Dory 25D came along, sowing great confusion everywhere.

*by John Vigor*

# Unique interior for a *classy* classic

She was also a Cape Dory, and she was also 25 feet long, but she was wider, heavier, deeper, and derived auxiliary power from a small inboard diesel instead of a gasoline outboard.

The 25D has been compared with the classic 25-foot British design, the Vertue. Numbers of this Laurent Giles favorite are found all over the world, and many have made circumnavigations. In theory, even though the 25D is about half the displacement of a Vertue, she's equally capable of deepsea work; but for some reason she has not yet developed the same kind of reputation. Perhaps her time is yet to come.

### Basic design

She has a solid GRP hull, but her decks and the cabintop are GRP/balsa sandwiches. End-grain balsa is extremely light, and it's highly resistant to crushing. It also provides good insulation against heat, cold, and sound. But it has a wicked habit of soaking up water and turning to slush if you don't take a lot of trouble to seal the through-holes for deck fittings. Luckily, balsa that has deteriorated is usually quite easy to detect, either by tapping the deck with a screwdriver handle and listening for a dull thud instead of a good solid ring, or else simply by jumping up and down on it heavily.

The 25D has an old-fashioned, hard-bilged, full keel — a true sea-going keel, slightly cut away up forward — and a deep-displacement hull. Her rudder has a straight afteredge and is squared off at the bottom. It hangs off

the end of the keel, with the rudderstock appearing well aft in the cockpit. The propeller spins in an aperture cut half from the rudder and half from the deadwood. This is a real cruising underbody, strong and very resistant to tangling with crabbers' underwater lines.

Above the waterline she looks solidly and pleasingly traditional, although her mast is taller and her sailplan more efficient than those of most traditional boats. Her cabinhouse has the chunky, purposeful appearance of a boat that works for its living, yet it avoids looking boxy. Her cocky sheerline manages well the important task of resolving the aesthetic conflict between a straight, sawn-off counter stern and a rounded bow with a moderate overhang.

The cockpit is generously sized — in fact it's bordering on too large for serious ocean work — but it does have a sensible bridgedeck to prevent water cascading down below in the event of a pooping. There is a shallow cockpit locker to starboard and a deeper one to port.

An anchor roller is built into the stemhead forestay fitting, and the foredeck also accommodates a reasonably-sized anchor locker capable of holding an anchor, some chain, and a normal nylon rode. In general, the foredeck is free of toe-stubbing fittings and feels bigger than it really is.

The standard engine is the little 7½-hp Yanmar diesel, a neat installation that weighs little more than 150 pounds. It's cooled by raw sea water and drives a two-bladed bronze propeller. The 25D's nominal range under power

at cruising speed is about 200 to 250 miles, drawing about a quart of fuel an hour from her 13-gallon tank. Access to the engine is pretty good, via a lift-out bin in the top of the covering box, and also — if you need to get really up close and serious — by taking away the companionway steps and unscrewing the front panel of the box.

### Accommodations

As far as the accommodations go, Carl Alberg did a very sensible thing by putting the head where the V-berth would normally be. By opting to do without a cramped V-berth, he opened up a large toilet and storage area capable of being closed off completely from the rest of the boat — a real luxury in a 25-footer. This arrangement makes a great deal of sense for a cruising couple, for whom a V-berth would just be a place to store random odds and ends such as blown-out sails and expired flares anyway.

There are two settee berths in the main cabin, a short-looking one to port whose footlocker protrudes through the main bulkhead to form a countertop in the head compartment, and a normal-looking one to starboard that pulls out to form a double. There's also a fourth bunk if anyone should need it, a quarterberth to starboard.

A cabin sole located low in the bilge provides standing headroom throughout the boat — 5 feet 11 inches in the saloon and 5 feet 9 inches in the head compartment, which has its own deck-opening hatch and two opening

***Bob and Paula Ohler sail Aloha Spirit, facing page, in the Middle Chesapeake. Dave and Jane Olson found their dreamboat, Sophie, resting in a barn in Wisconsin. They towed her home to Minneapolis, Minn., to sail on nearby Lake Minnetonka. One of their favorite additions is their "Conestoga-wagon-style awning" by Shadetree, shown in photo.***





***Bruce Barber may have the most extensively updated 25D anywhere. Above, a view of the standard head compartment and modifications to create a nav station on his Nancy Dawson. More about his projects on Page 8. Karma's galley, far right. Lou and Marcia Ostendorf sail this 25D on the Neuse River and Pamlico Sound with Beaufort, North Carolina, and Ocracoke Island as favorite destinations.***

ports for ventilation.

Unfortunately, there's a design law that says if you stick four full-sized bunks and an oversized head into a 25-footer, you don't have any room left over for a chart table and precious little for a galley. There is a galley, to be sure, but it would delight only the heart of a Spartan. It features a twin-burner alcohol stove, which produces little heat at great expense, and a stainless steel sink whose main feature seems to be inaccessibility. It is largely hidden beneath the bridgedeck and its fresh-water pump is so artfully concealed and difficult to work that it might have been conceived deliberately to save water.

In fact, bachelor sailors might be tempted to wash their dishes in the head, where there's a sink right out in the open within reach, but for more fastidious crews, washing up on this boat will mean sitting in the cockpit with a bucket. Still it's not a bad swap for such a comfortable sleeping cabin and head compartment. And if you're handy with tools, the galley situation could be improved fairly easily.

The ports in the main cabin all open to provide wonderful cross-breezes in hot climates and almost certainly the odd drip of rainwater in more temperate climates. They are solid bronze and add greatly to the 25D's air of old-fashioned reliability.

### **The rig**

The 25D carries a comparatively tall mast, stepped on deck but supported underneath by a compression post that takes the load straight to the keel. This avoids the very common problem of deck beams and bulkheads buckling under the constant downward pressure exerted by the mast.

The masthead sloop rig is simple, efficient, and easily managed. The mainsail has an area of 140 square feet, and the foretriangle measures 164 square feet, making cockpit sheet winches more of a cruising convenience than a necessity. The mainsheet traveler is sensibly located aft of the tiller.

Double lower shrouds support the mast at each side, and a single forestay and backstay running to the truck take care of fore-and-aft movement.

The shrouds terminate at their lower ends in massive chainplates set into the hull/deck joint, and while that interferes with the sheeting angle of the jib, it provides the widest — and therefore most stable — base of support for the mast. That's an important consideration with a high-aspect-ratio rig.

### **Performance**

Her hard bilges and high ballast ratio make her quite stiff, and she stands up to her canvas well but, as in any small boat, you'll need to reef her mainsail

when the wind gets up to around 16 or 20 knots. She is modern enough (just) to have come equipped with efficient jiffy reefing instead of the troublesome main-boom roller reefing so favored by builders in earlier years.

She's no racer, but her PHRF rating of 252 proves she's no sluggard, either. She'll need a bit of help in calm weather to overcome the frictional resistance of her large underwater area though, and large light foresails will provide it.

You'll find the shrouds prevent you from sheeting in a 100-percent foresail tight enough for really high pointing, but if you're willing to go to the trouble of re-arranging the sheeting, you can bring the foresail sheet inboard of the shrouds for a beat, making use of a length of track on the cabintop, and take it back outside the shrouds for a reach or a run.

If you're beating in any kind of chop, you probably won't bother to change the sheeting position because you'll need to fall off the wind a little, in any case, to gain enough power to drive you through the waves.

### **Known weaknesses**

- Poor access to the galley sink.
- Water capacity. She carries only 20 gallons of drinking water in a plastic tank. For an ocean crossing, you'd need to double that amount at least,





*Nancy Dawson's cockpit at left. Bruce Barber has revised a John Gardner pram (in tow) creating a dinghy which can be stowed on the foredeck (see Page 8). He notes that the pram's not all that comfortable to row and makes more of a surface disturbance than the Nancy Dawson when under way, but his grandson loves the small boat. Below, the Olsons' Sophie shows her Alberg heritage.*

carrying the extra in small cans or a flexible bladder.

- No chart table. It's not an unusual failing, even in much larger boats, but the appointments of the 25D seem so solid and complete that you notice it more here. A cunningly placed sheet of plywood or a folding table would suffice.

### **Owners' opinions**

Bob Ohler sails his Cape Dory 25D, *Aloha Spirit*, hull #2, out of Deale, Maryland, and cruises in the Middle Chesapeake. He has been sailing for 20 years and does a lot of singlehanding. He says the 25D is ideal for that.

In his part of the world they talk about "Cape Dory days." That's when the wind is in the northwest, blowing 18 to 22 knots, and the bay is covered with whitecaps. The boat loves it.

The first thing he does when the wind starts to rise is take one reef in the mainsail. That happens at about 16 knots. "She's well balanced and very easy to control then," he says. "My wife never has any trouble with her. The boat has a little weather helm, but that's a good thing, and it never gets excessive if you reef in time."

Bob finds the boat to be good and stiff. In fact, he has sailed her in 30 knots and 5-foot seas with a working foresail and just one reef in the main. It's not the sort of thing he'd recommend you to do for long, especially at sea, but it shows the boat can take it.

He raked the mast back 6 inches to make her point better, and when he's going to windward he uses the Cunningham cringle for a flattening reef. "It makes her point 10 degrees higher," Bob claims.

"She needs some sort of headsail at all times," he notes. "It seems to help to windward, especially — prevents her hobbyhorsing and plugging away in the same hole. She'll do that if you don't have a jib to pull her over the waves." He says she's also a star performer on a reach under foresail only.

*Aloha Spirit* has a Yanmar IGM single-cylinder, 7-hp diesel, which Bob cautiously describes as "adequate."

He always wears a safety harness when he's alone and strings jacklines

of 1-inch nylon webbing from the bow, around each side of the cabintop, and then back to the cockpit.

His headsail has a downhaul that leads back to the cockpit, just as the foresail halyard does, so he can drop the sail at will. Then he trims and cleats the sheet to keep the sail firmly in place on deck.

Bob's against roller furling on the foresail. "I've had it on other boats," he says. "You just never know when it will go wrong. I'd never go back to it."

For deep-sea work, Bob advises that you:

- Check the chainplates for rust.
- Get a solar panel to keep the batteries charged.
- Fit a self-steering wind vane.



Mike Smith sails his Cape Dory 25D, *Solitude*, out of Niantic, Connecticut. He has owned her since 1986 and has put in a lot of hours in all kinds of weather up and down the coast.

*Solitude* has a 135-percent genoa on a roller furler gear, so the first thing Mike does when the wind pipes up is crank in the jib.

At about 16 to 20 knots, the jib will need to be down to about 100 percent, and he'll take in the first of the two jiffy reefs he has in the mainsail.

"She gets weather helm as she heels over," Mike says, "but as soon as you take that reef in the main and flatten out the sail, she's perfect — easy to handle."

He finds the boat to be the ideal size for singlehanding, although she's also comfortable with two aboard. "She's not a handful," he notes. "Everything is set up nicely in the cockpit for a singlehander. Even docking is no problem."

Mike, too, has the standard Yanmar 7-hp diesel, but has stronger views about it, perhaps because *Solitude* often needs a very strong push upriver. "It's grossly underpowered," he feels. "I'd like to replace it with a 12-horse, two-cylinder diesel in a couple of years."

His advice for anyone contemplating an ocean voyage in a 25D:

- Beef up the lower shrouds. Make the standing rigging ¼-inch diameter all around.
- Secure the companionway hatchboards in place at sea.
- Add padeyes in the cockpit for your safety harness.
- Run safety jacklines of nylon webbing or tubing from the bow cleats to the stern cleats.

## Conclusion

You'd go a long way to find a 25-foot boat with a better interior than this for serious cruising. Doing away with the V-berth up forward was a radical design concept but a real winner in a boat dedicated from the start to cruising.

For \$12,000 to \$15,000 (maybe a



***Bruce Barber built his stitch-n-glue (actually drywall screw-n-tape) pram to fit on the foredeck of the 25D. He notes that the lashed-on gunwhale cushioning is pipe insulation in a Sunbrella sleeve.***

little more if she has been upgraded and maintained to meticulous standards) you can buy a classic Alberg that will take you anywhere in a lot more safety and comfort than you'll find in almost any other 25-footer you care to name.

## Further thoughts

Bruce Barber sails *Nancy Dawson*, a 1982 model, hull #77, in the Chesapeake. Some of his thoughts, taken from a letter to *Good Old Boat*:

Few changes had been made to the boat before I purchased it, so I found myself improving, in modest ways, an already fine boat, rather than undoing or reworking (or perhaps even accepting!) previous owners' efforts. A blank canvas, as it were ... If a boat has to have a "worst feature," the 25D's is the location of the galley sink, which is tucked under the bridge deck and nearly inaccessible. The best that can be said of the sink is that its removal improves maintenance access to the engine ... On the Chesapeake, the primary need for prolonged use of the engine is motoring in calms, and for this the engine (1GM) is perfectly suited. Powering upwind in waves, though, can try your patience ... Capacities — of water, provisions storage, and holding tank — are the factors that limit cruising independence. The "berths for four" provide two people a good level of comfort. The head com-

partment is downright luxurious ... The water tank is poorly plumbed. Both the deck fill hose and the vent hose enter from the side, so both are full of water much of the time, and venting is poor. I removed both hoses, and fill the tank at its quarterberth access. The vent is now a small hole drilled in the cap ... The holding tank is under the engine, with the head about 10 feet distant in the bow. These were originally connected by a hose passing through the locker under the port settee. One of my first revisions was to replace the hose with rigid PVC ... There is a lot of teak, which increases the time spent on annual maintenance, but due to the simple systems and small

size, this is still a low-maintenance boat ... The original bronze fittings are all still available from Spartan, so new cleats, for instance, can be matched to those existing ... All things considered, the 25D is a good-performing, confidence-inspiring boat, sturdily built and well-equipped. What attracted me was its traditional appearance, the Cape Dory reputation for seaworthiness, an expectation of easy singlehanding and one-person maintenance, the likelihood of few expense-related surprises, and the 3½-foot draft, which allows access where many others fear to tread. 



*John Vigor is a professional journalist. The author of The Practical Mariner's Book of Knowledge, The Sailor's Assistant, and The Seaworthy Offshore*

*Sailboat, he has worked for major newspapers around the world and is a frequent contributor to leading sailing magazines. This series of boat reviews is based on articles from John's book: Twenty Small Sailboats to Take You Anywhere, which is available from The Good Old Bookshelf. In the course of writing this book, John sold his Santana 22 and bought a Cape Dory 25D, which he and his wife, June, sail in the Pacific Northwest.*



## Cape Dory 25D

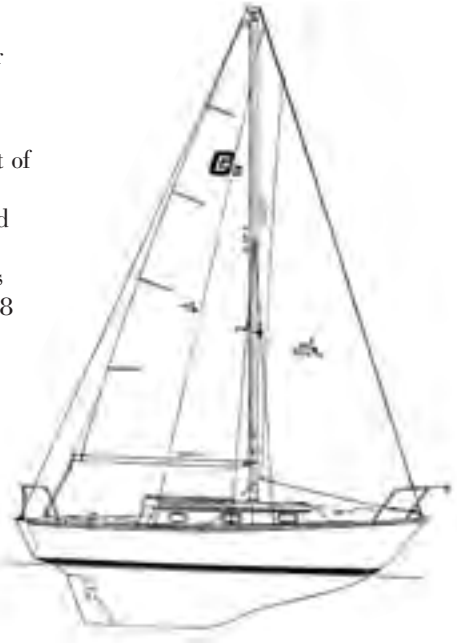
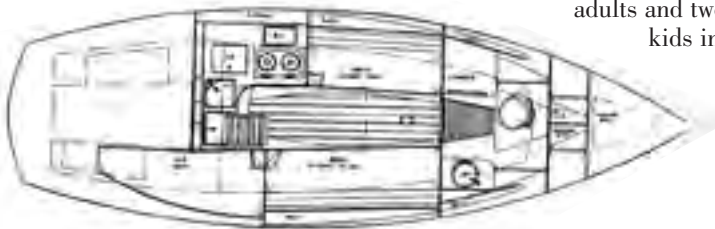
### In short

**Designer:** Carl Alberg (1981)  
**LOA:** 25 feet 0 inches  
**LWL:** 19 feet 0 inches  
**Beam:** 8 feet 0 inch  
**Draft:** 3 feet 6 inches  
**Displacement:** 5,120 pounds  
**Sail area:** 304 square feet  
**Ballast:** Encapsulated lead  
**Spars:** Aluminum

**Auxiliary:** 7½ hp diesel  
**Designed as:** Conservative cruiser

### In comparison

- **Safety-at-sea factor:** 7 (Rated out of 10, with 10 being the safest.)
- **Speed rating:** Not fast, but not bad for an out-and-out cruiser. In the Northeast USA, her PHRF rating is 252. In comparison, a Herreshoff 28 ketch rates 255.
- **Ocean comfort level:** One or two adults in comfort; two adults and two kids in



## Cape Dory Resources

### Cape Dory 27 refit page

Peter Baumgartner  
pbaumgartner@mindspring.com  
<<http://demo.napsys.com/london/>>  
Peter told *Good Old Boat* readers about his Cape Dory 27 refit in January and March 2001 issues. Photos of the project on his site.

### Cape Dory 30 Personal Page

Ed and Pat Carlson  
<<http://hometown.aol.com/skywind/mcm/Page4.htm>>

### Cape Dory Discussion List

<<http://members.sailnet.com/resources/links/list/index-new.cfm?id=capedory>>

### Cape Dory Discussion Message Board

<<http://www.toolworks.com/capedory/>>

### Cape Dory Owners' Association (California)

Micaela Baker  
P.O. Box 305  
Denair, CA 95316  
micaelaf@earthlink.net  
<<http://www.toolworks.com/capedory/>>  
Holds members events twice a year, publishes an occasional newsletter, and hosts active Web discussion.

### Cape Dory Owners' Association (California)

Jo Anne Kipp  
1801 Parkwood Dr.  
San Mateo, CA 94403  
Dick Honey, co-commadore

### Cape Dory Owners' Association (Lake Michigan)

Kim Richards  
Williwaw@att.net  
<<http://williwaw.home.att.net>>  
\$15 to join. Monthly newsletter is *SeaWorthy*. Jerry Hammernik is co-founder of the organization with Kim and Jan Richards.

### Cape Dory Sailboat Owners' Association (National)

Bob Ohler  
5001 Valley Dr.  
Chesapeake Beach, MD 20732  
410-535-9596  
bobohler@chesapeake.net  
Publishes a bi-monthly newsletter and promotes on-the-water activities.

### Cape Dory Sailboat Owners Association (NE Fleet)

Fleet Captain Leo MacDonald  
860-859-9600  
macdola@gwsmtponu.com  
<<http://www.toolworks.com/cdsoa/>>  
Fleet Secretary Catherine Monaghan,  
catherine\_monaghan@merck.com;  
732-381-3549

### Cape Dory — The Typhoon

Noel Peattie  
23311 County Road 88  
Winters, CA 95694-9008  
530-662-3364  
Prints newsletter at no cost to readers (except for a contribution for postage), also prints a directory of Typhoon owners.

### Robinhood Marine Center

HC 33, Box 1460  
Georgetown, ME 04549  
800-443-3625  
rmc@clinic.net  
<<http://www.robinhoodyachts.com>>

### Spartan Marine

A subsidiary of Robinhood Marine offering parts for Cape Dory boats.  
800-325-3287

### Triad Trailers

A former supplier of trailers to Cape Dory and its dealers. Still has specific specs for Typhoons and most Cape Dory sailboats up to 30 feet.  
860-354-1146  
triadtrls@aol.com



## Catalina 27



IT MIGHT COME AS A SURPRISE TO FIND the Catalina 27 described as seaworthy enough to sail around the world. I can think of some dedicated traditionalists who would faint dead away at the very suggestion.

But she is included (in the book *Twenty Small Boats to Take You Anywhere*) for some very practical reasons. First, a lot of people are going to be tempted to take the Catalina 27 offshore. They should know what her limitations are. Second, Catalina 27s have sailed around the world very successfully. Prospective adventurers need to know how that success was achieved. Third, Catalina 27s are very available. They're belly-button boats. Everyone seems to have one. And they're cheap. More than 6,000 27s have been produced since Frank Butler started building them in California in 1971. It's the largest production run of a 27-foot sailboat in the history of boatbuilding.

Perhaps it's important to state the obvious right at the beginning: a good sailor could sail around the world in almost anything. Just because the Catalina 27 has made circumnavigations, it doesn't make her anything like the ideal boat. Nevertheless, her weak points are well known, and she is capable of being improved substantially by enthusiastic amateurs. She's not the kind of boat you'd want to take around

# A roomy good-looker

Cape Horn in winter, but with a lot of caution and seamanlike preparation you could sail her around the Cape of Good Hope in summer.

Before you rush out and start looking at secondhand Catalina 27s, be aware that there are several different models, some more suitable than others for ocean work.

There are models with deep keels and shoal-draft keels. Some have tall rigs, and others have standard rigs. About half have outboard engines, and the rest have inboard engines. The two standard interior designs are the traditional version, with the galley located aft, and the dinette version, which has the galley amidships.

For our purposes, the deep-keel, tall-rig, aft-galley, outboard engine version is most suitable. With a tall

rig, you can fly plenty of sail to get you through calms. Why an outboard? We'll come to that in a bit.

The original displacement of the deep-keel outboard model was about 5,600 pounds, while the shoal-draft 27 displaced about 6,100 pounds, the extra 500 pounds being carried as added ballast in the keel.

But as the years have rolled by, the Catalina 27 has put on weight along with the rest of us. Displacement of later boats has crept up to 6,800 pounds or more as the interior has become more sophisticated and loaded down with inboard engines and the paraphernalia of sewage holding tanks, Y-valves, fuel tanks, and so on.

An older, lighter boat is probably the best bet for an extended sea voyage. You're going to add plenty of weight

by John Vigor



*Page 45: Antebellum, a C27 tall-rig, sails Georgia waters with Brad and Stephanie Coy aboard.*

*This page: Bill and Kathe Foster's Manu'iwa shows the C27's fin keel and free-standing rudder. Manu'iwa is Hawaiian for a large frigate bird known as a man-o-war. The Foster's boat was named by the previous owner, a hang-gliding enthusiast.*

in the form of food and water, and you don't want to destroy this boat's main asset — her speed and sailing ability — by burdening her too much.

### **Basic design**

The first thing you could say about the Catalina 27 is that she was designed to be affordable. That is, cheap. There is no expensive overbuilding here, no redundant overlapping systems, no salty bronze opening ports at more than \$100 a smack. She was designed for a purpose, and she fulfills that purpose well. Let's just not kid ourselves that she was designed to sail around the world.

The Catalina 27 is a fin-keeler with a free-standing rudder extending aft underwater beneath the transom. There is no support from a skeg. The first thing you notice about her is that she handles like a dinghy, which is hardly surprising since that's what she basically is — a dinghy with delusions of grandeur.

She's light and beamy. The tall rig is skinny and efficient. She is reasonably stiff and stands up well to her canvas. All this makes her a fast, maneuverable, and easily controlled boat, but it doesn't do much for seaworthiness.

With a beam of 8 feet 6 inches (later increased to 8 feet 10 inches) the hull needs to be fairly shallow, so as not to increase displacement and underwater resistance. That, in turn, limits the space inside for accommodations and stowage. But what the Catalina 27 lacks below the waterline is more than compensated for by what's above it. This boat is a good example of nautical trompe-l'oeil. She deceives the eye. Her topsides are deep and her cabintop

high, so that her interior is actually about the biggest you'll find on any boat with a 22-foot waterline. But you wouldn't think so by just looking at her from the outside. Through some cunning design, or by pure luck, Frank Butler happened on a bulky design that is not aesthetically offensive. Far from it. She's not a bad looker at all. The deep crown in the cabintop helps considerably, and the fairly straight sheerline gives her a look of modern sleekness. But there's something else at work there, too, some magic mingling of line, curve, and proportion that brings pleasure to the eye.

The decks and cockpits of older boats were what you might call uncluttered, even with essentials such as a bow roller, but that can be an advantage, too. Sometimes it's easier to start with a clean sheet and add your own custom fittings. Incidentally, in the beginning there were no backing plates on the fittings that were supplied. That kind of pennypinching inevitably leads to cracked gelcoats and possible delamination of the GRP around the bases of stanchions, cleats, and rails. Happily, things changed for the better on later boats.

The 27's cockpit is fairly large and lacks a proper bridge deck to stop heavy water from entering the saloon. There are ways around this problem that we will discuss later, but they bring with them the usual penalties — inconvenience and the need for constant vigilance.

A little earlier we asked why an outboard engine is the type recommended for an extended voyage. The answer is simple. Although about half of all Catalina 27s are fitted with inboard engines, they shouldn't be. It's possible to squeeze one of those sweet-running little Universal 14-hp twins into the space aft of the saloon, and then bolt the deck and cockpit on top of it, but there's practically no way to get to it after that. You might as well kiss it goodbye.

As a result of poor access and the consequent problems of routine servicing, the inboard engine of a used boat is likely to have been neglected unless the previous owner was double-jointed and could change the oil by feel alone.

The outboard-engined versions of the 27 free up a lot of stowage space down below and avoid most of the problems of servicing, although they're



*The Fosters bought Manu'iwa with an outboard motor well in the "wet lazarette." They enlarged this space and modified the lid to accommodate their new 8-hp Mercury.*



*The Fosters added a new faucet and counter in the galley. They also replaced the head and constructed a support for the overhanging base. And they added anti-siphon loops to the inlet and outlet lines.*



not exactly easy to manhandle in and out of the well at the aft end of the cockpit. In fact, if you're planning to cross an ocean, it would be better to mount the outboard on a bracket attached to the outer face of the lazarett. That further frees up valuable lazarette space.

A 9.9-hp outboard is about the right size for the Catalina 27, though you can go as low as 5 hp if you intend to motor only when there's not enough wind to sail. And then you could use the same engine on your inflatable dinghy. The Catalina 27 can't carry much gasoline, of course, so her range under power will be limited, but she sails so well that you'll only need the engine for getting through the odd pass in a coral reef or for maneuvering in port.

### **Accommodations**

There's hardly another 27-footer around that compares with the Catalina 27 for a feeling of bright airiness and space down below. Despite her faults, and they are many, this boat offers so much in the way of accommodations that owners are prepared to overlook the rest.

The companionway hatch is responsible for much of the spacious feeling. It's very wide. When it's fully opened, the heavens appear to invade the boat's interior, letting in light, air, and the sweet smell of the sea. At the same time, a large hatch is a danger at sea, not only because it is structurally weaker than a smaller one, but also because of the vast volume of water it would admit if the boat were suddenly capsized while it was open.

There is standing headroom of 6-feet 1 inch in the main cabin, but it tapers down as you move forward. Still, for a 27-footer, it's very generous.

The traditional aft-galley layout supports six berths. They aren't all comfortable to sleep in — the two in

the forecabin and the one on the port side of the main cabin are short — but nobody should even contemplate sleeping six adults in a Catalina 27 anyway. The settee berth on the starboard side converts into a double bed for cozy cuddling in port, but the only really decent sea bed is the starboard quarterberth.

Just aft of the forecabin, on the starboard side, there's an enclosed head that is reasonably comfortable to use. As is usual on a boat of this size, there's precious little locker space, although many owners have found that they can open up extra stowage pockets by cutting into the plastic interior liner in strategic places.

The original galley equipment was a two-burner alcohol stove, which can be recommended only if you have plenty of time on your hands and enjoy spending a lot of money on a little heat. Propane is quicker, easier, and more efficient. It can also be dangerous. But then, so can going to sea in a Catalina 27. Traditionalists will change over to kerosene, which is smellier, messier, and more trouble, but safer and cheaper.

Over the years, the Catalina 27's rather austere looks down below have been softened by the addition of more wooden trim, but its side effects are detrimental, both on the speed of the boat and the checkbook of the owner. This boat will never look like a Hinckley or a Hallberg-Rassy, no matter how much trim is added.

### **The rig**

The Catalina 27 is not dressed for the sea. Her rig is weak and needs to be beefed up. Shrouds and stays should be replaced with wire at least one size bigger. The chainplates for the aft lower shrouds should be strengthened, too. Owners of older boats like to tell how they watched the deck bowing



upward at the chainplates in heavy weather. Some bolted new stainless steel chainplates through the topsides, as was the fashion in the good old days, and fastened the shrouds to them. It means the jib won't sheet at such a narrow angle, but it's a good trade for keeping the mast up.

Change the spreader sockets, too. The old ones were made of cast aluminum, which has a reputation of cracking under stress. You can get new stainless steel ones from the factory.

Otherwise, the rig is pretty simple and efficient — a single-spreader mast-head sloop of 340 square feet with the sail area fairly evenly divided between the main and foretriangle. The spars are aluminum, of course, and she uses jiffy reefing on the mainsail.

### **Performance**

The tall-rig, deep-keel, outboard-engined Catalina 27 that is best suited to deep-sea work is also the best performer. The secret of making fast passages in this boat is to keep her light. She will not only sail faster and go to windward better, but she'll





**Antebellum's home port is the Isle of Hope, Georgia. At the dock, she displays an uncluttered deck and Frank Butler's sleek lines.**

be safer because she'll put less strain on her hull and rigging. When she's pounded by a wave, a boat like this must be able to give way fast. She hasn't got the strength to resist like a solid rock taking everything that comes. She must submit. Her narrow keel helps her to slip sideways through the water, reducing the force of the blow, but too much weight will sink her lower, slow her responses, and punish her accordingly. A Catalina 27 must be lively to live.

So be careful how you load her. Take only enough food and water for the passage in hand. Resist the temptation to stock up on canned goods for three years because your local supermarket is having the sale of a lifetime. Keep that weight down.

The outboard version is faster than the inboard version for two reasons: an outboard is a fraction of the weight of an inboard engine, and you can raise an outboard's propeller out of the water to avoid drag.

Under sail she's lively, but you can control her with one finger on the tiller until it really starts to blow. She won't hold her course faithfully for 10 minutes while you clean up the mess the anchor made on the foredeck, of course, although she tracks better than you might expect from a fin keeler. The lightness of the helm is an advantage in at least one respect: you can use a small self-steering windvane, such as the Navik, which weighs only 41 pounds.

Like most beamy little lightweights, she tends to gather weather helm as the wind rises and makes her heel excessively. Weather helm describes a sailboat's continuous attempt to gripe, or turn into the wind, which must be counteracted by pulling the tiller to weather.

There are ways to deal with excess-

ive weather helm, either by varying the amount of sail fore and aft, so that she is forced to turn away from the wind by more sail area forward, or by changing the depth of draft in a sail.

But the best way to reduce weather helm and maintain control on a boat like the Catalina 27 is to reef down. As soon as she comes more upright, the tendency to gripe is greatly reduced.

You can try this for yourself in the bathtub with a model yacht. If you push the mast from directly behind when she's dead upright, the yacht will go straight ahead. If you push in the same spot while she's heeled over to starboard, she'll spin around to port. The mast acts as a sideways lever to screw her into the wind. And the more she heels, the more effective that lever is.

So keep your Catalina 27 upright — or at least reduce that excessive angle of heel — by reefing down as soon as you experience that feeling that she's getting out of control.

### Known weaknesses

We've already mentioned the backing plates for deck fittings, the standing rigging, the chainplates, and the spreader sockets.

The lack of a bridge deck means you'll have to keep one or more hatchboards in place in the companionway, and you must be sure they're solidly fixed in place so you won't lose them in a capsize. They will hamper your access to the cockpit — you will have to high-step over them every darned time you come and go — but it's a small penalty to pay for the security they provide.

Check the seacocks. You must have a bronze seacock on every through-hull opening. Some of the original through-hull fittings on the Catalina 27 were simply pipe nipples glassed into the hull. Change them for proper flanged, bolt-through bronze through-hulls. And if your boat has gate valves fitted to the through-hulls instead of seacocks, change them, too. Gate

valves, no matter what material they're made of, are not seagoing fittings. Change them for bronze ball seacocks, or the traditional tapered barrel type. Check the icebox drain. There have been reports of water running back into the box when the boat heels over. Fit a seacock to the through-hull.

### Owner's opinion

I once tested a Catalina 27 for a week for *Cruising World* magazine and found her quite free of vices under sail and power. I didn't have the opportunity to test her in extreme conditions at sea, but I discovered a man who did. He's Patrick Childress, of Newport, Rhode Island, who sailed his secondhand Catalina 27, *Juggernaut*, around the world alone in the 1980s.

He experienced the worst weather of his trip in the cantankerous and unpredictable Indian Ocean. During a particularly bad storm he stripped *Juggernaut* down to a storm jib. He then sheeted it in tightly and set his Navik windvane self-steering gear to keep *Juggernaut* close on the wind.

With the boat heeled well over, even under the tiny jib, she gained weather helm, so there was not much work for the Navik to do to keep her heading about 45 degrees into the waves as she forged slowly ahead. This is a classic hove-to position, but very few classic boats ever manage to achieve it, and it's ironic that a boat normally considered unsuitable for deep-sea work should be able to heave to so well in extreme conditions.

She occasionally got lifted up by an extra-big wave and dumped down sideways, but she always recovered quickly, so Childress left her at it until the storm blew itself out.

Childress got his boat very cheaply

### Resources for Catalina 27 sailors

**Catalina 27 Association**  
<http://www.catalina27.org>

**Catalina 27 National Association**

John Ebell  
 312 Severn Ave. E-311  
 Annapolis, MD 21403  
 410-295-9244

and worked full-time for three months to make her fit for sea. Here are some of the major changes he made:

He stiffened the hull by installing mini-bulkheads in all storage areas beneath the berths. This also divided the stowage into more conveniently sized compartments, of course.

He installed a 1-inch-thick mahogany plank inside the starboard side of the transom as a stiffener and backing plate for an outboard engine bracket.

He improved cockpit drainage by installing four large hoses leading downward between the aft end of the cockpit and the transom. There were through-hull fittings at each end of each pipe.

He stopped water from forcing its way through the front and sides of the closed main hatch by making new, tighter-fitting runners. He also fixed plastic tabs on the front of the hatch.

He bolted new chainplates through the hull.

He changed the stove burners from alcohol to kerosene. The threads are the same, so it is a simple matter of unscrewing the old burner and screwing in the new one.

He installed double headstays.

He fitted heavier topmast shrouds and aft lower shrouds. The forward lower shrouds stayed the same.

He installed open-faced, stronger turnbuckles.

He installed double backstays, with a backstay adjuster.

He removed the forward bolt on

the rudder bracket, the one that goes through the tiller, and replaced it with two stainless steel hose clamps.

He installed a ½-inch bolt through the rudderpost cap, where the cap attaches to the rudder stock. The original bolt is too small and will eventually wear an oblong hole.

He installed a medium-duty electric bilge pump in the bilge, fitted with a float switch and manual override. He also installed a large-capacity electric pump with a float switch in the protected area under the cockpit for extreme emergencies in case the cabin became flooded. (He used a solar panel to charge his one battery, aided occasionally by a small-capacity generator on his outboard motor.)

He caulked the hull-deck joint with 3M-5200 sealant to fill the void behind the rubrail, which was leaking.


He boarded over the outboard engine well and fitted his Navik self-steering gear there.

## Conclusion

We live in an age when it is both fashionable and legally advisable to warn people about the many ways in which they can harm or kill themselves. One is forced to wonder how people ever managed to survive before this fashion was all the rage and how the human population of the world ever managed to grow to the record level it is at today.

So while it is correct to say that

going to sea in a Catalina 27 can be harmful to your health, one always harbors the hope that anyone imbued with the human spirit of adventure and the need to explore will deem the risks necessary, even invigorating.

Of course you shouldn't go to sea in a Catalina 27 if you're an absolute beginner with no knowledge of sailing or navigation. But if you're a reasonably experienced sailor with a good deal of common sense and are prepared to work to get the boat right and to study to make sure you're in the right places at the right seasons, there's no practical reason why you shouldn't sail an old Catalina 27 around the world as others have before you. And a whole lot of us would cheer you on. 

*John Vigor has sailed for more than 40 years and logged some 15,000 miles of ocean voyaging. In 1987 he and his wife, June, and their 17-year-old-*



*son sailed their 31-foot sloop from South Africa to the U.S. This and other reviews are reprinted from John Vigor's book, Twenty Small Sailboats to*

*Take You Anywhere. Also see his book, The Seaworthy Offshore Sailboat, which devotes a chapter to beefing up a Catalina 27 for offshore sailing. Both books are available from the Good Old Bookshelf. See Page 65 for more information.*

## Catalina 27

### In short

**Designer:** Frank Butler (1971)

**LOA:** 26 feet 10 inches

**LWL:** 21 feet 9 inches

**Beam:** 8 feet 6 inches

**Draft:** 3 feet 5 inches

(shoal) or 4 feet 0 inch

**Displacement:** 6,850 pounds

**Sail area:** 340 square feet

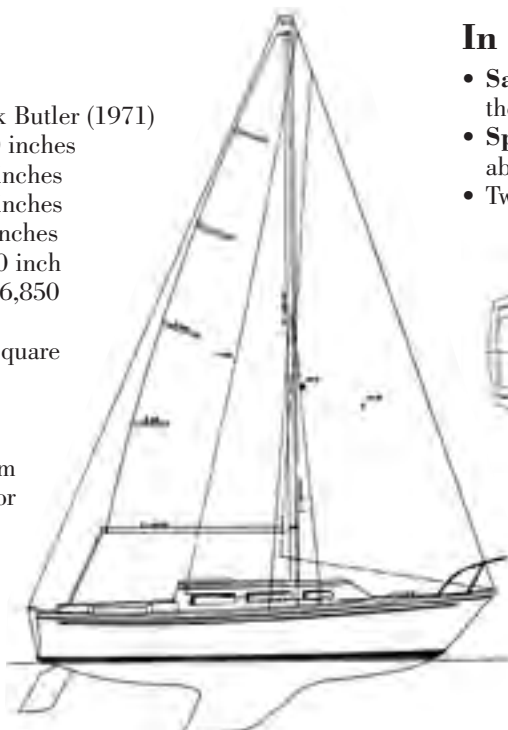
**Ballast:** 2,700 pounds

**Spars:** Aluminum

**Auxiliary:** Gas or diesel, inboard or outboard

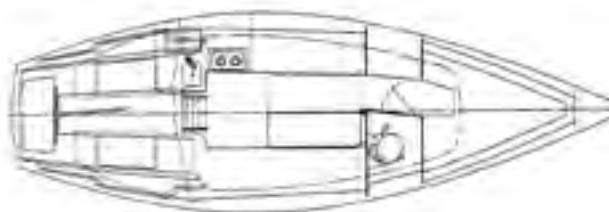
**Designed as:**

Entry-level daysailer and coastal cruiser/racer



## In comparison

- **Safety-at-sea factor:** 4 (Rated out of 10, with 10 being the safest.)
- **Speed rating:** Relatively fast. Average PHRF rating about 200.
- Two adults in a small degree of comfort.





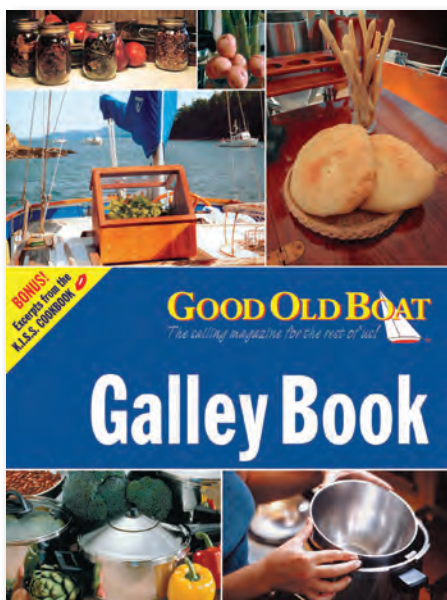
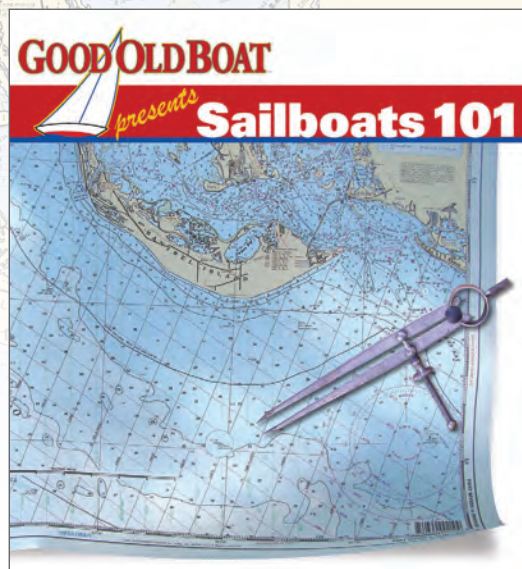
# Archive eXtractions

Articles compiled for you from *Good Old Boat* archives

## Sailboats 101

The Sailboats 101 series of articles — written by Don Launer and illustrated by Ted Tollefson — was introduced in 2003 in our July issue. Beginning with Depth Sounders 101, Don came up with the subjects for each 101 article. Subject matter has varied widely and includes binoculars, bilge pumps, bronze, and brass. The Sailboats 101 collection contains all Don's articles from July 2003 to November 2011. As their titles suggest, 101 articles present introductory information on a variety of subjects covered in other ways in the pages of the magazine.

There's no one better at explaining something concisely than Don Launer, a lifetime do-it-yourselfer, sailor, engineer, and tinkerer. We asked him to write no more than 900 words on any topic and to work with Ted Tollefson, another sailor who would be doing the layout and developing the illustrations.



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- What to do when the salad is gone
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# Contessa 26: A legendary



**T**he Contessa 26, also known as the J.J. Taylor 26, is one of many variations on the basic Folkboat theme, but she has several unique claims to fame. Not the least among them is the name of her designer, British naval architect David Sadler, who also designed the Contessa 32.

You may recall that the Contessa 32 was the only yacht to finish in her class — the smallest class, incidentally — in the infamous Fastnet Race of 1979. When a particularly vicious storm hit the racing fleet between England and Ireland, five yachts sank, 19 were abandoned, and 15 lives were lost. Only 85 yachts of 303 starters crossed the finish line.

Although the Contessa 26 is far different from the Contessa 32, above the waterline and below, Sadler's ability to design safe, seaworthy boats is quite evident in the Contessa 26 as well.

The 26 was also well publicized by the circumnavigations of Tania Aebi and Brian

Caldwell. Aebi became the youngest woman to sail around the world alone in *Varuna* — although she was technically disqualified for sailing one short leg with a companion. Later, Brian Caldwell chose a bright red 1975 Contessa 26 called *Mai (Miti) Vavau* — “Waves from a Distant Storm” — for his attempt to become the youngest person to sail around the world alone.

From the very first, the 26 gained a reputation for seaworthiness combined with good performance. Many of the entrants in the early singlehanded races across the Atlantic chose Contessa 26s, and they were also well represented in the Round Britain and Ireland Race.

The English boatbuilding firm of Jeremy Rogers first began building the Contessa 26 in 1966, and the demand for them was so great that in the first three years of production, 350 of the fiberglass hulls were laid up. But molds were shipped in 1969 to Toronto, Canada, where the firm of J.J. Taylor & Sons also started production.

In 1983, the Canadian firm redesigned the deck and interior and started using lead ballast instead of iron, which lowered the cabin sole and gave more headroom. A year later, the Canadian manufacturer dropped the name Contessa 26 and changed it to the J.J. Taylor 26.

Some 400 Contessa/Taylor 26s were built in Canada, and many of them found their way to the United States where they are still going strong.

## Basic design

When you look at the lines of the Contessa 26, you can't help but think “Folkboat.” The raking stern with its outboard rudder; the long, curved tiller; the sweeping sheerline; that gracious bow overhang: they're all signs of her Folkboat heritage. That's where her seaworthy genes and her classic Scandinavian good looks came from. But perhaps it would be more accurate to describe her as a Folkboat modernized and improved.

She's thoroughly traditional, with her full-length keel, but her masthead sloop rig is taller and skinnier, her foresail is bigger and more efficient, and she is more powerful to windward. A smidgen more beam has improved her accommodations without destroying her performance under sail, and a tip-tilt main hatchway has given her 5 feet 8 inches of

headroom below — at least over a small portion of the cabin.

The hull is solid fiberglass, and the decks

and cabintop are fiberglass cored with end-grain balsa. Balsa is good for insulation, and it's pretty effective at containing water damage to a small area. Nevertheless, deck leaks over a long period can lead to delamination, so check all the upper surfaces of the boat carefully if you're buying an older model.

The cockpit is of average size for a boat of this displacement and is self-draining, but it might be made smaller for extended ocean passages. If a breaking wave fills it, the boat will become vulnerable to the next wave approaching from astern, because she does not have excessive freeboard.

Taylor models built after hull #300 incorporated an anchor well in the bow for the first time, which created handy stowage for the

by John Vigor

# little circumnavigator

*The voyages of Tania Aebi  
and Brian Caldwell  
popularized  
this sturdy 26-footer*

ground tackle and kept the foredeck clear of toe-stubbing obstructions.

The standard engine is the 7-hp Farymann, a single-cylinder, raw-water-cooled diesel thumper that is reputed to use only 1 quart of fuel an hour at a cruising speed touching 5 knots. As the Contessa's fuel tank holds 12 gallons, that indicates a range under power in calm conditions of 240 miles.

Maximum power is developed at 2,500 rpm, but the propeller shaft, working through a 2-to-1-reduction gearbox, runs at only half that speed, pushing a 12-inch diameter x 9-inch pitch two-bladed prop. It's a no-frills engine installation with a reputation for reliability, but it's neither smooth nor restful in action, and you continually need to make sure it can't succeed in its frenzied efforts to shake itself loose from the engine mounts.

## **Accommodations**

There is a small bulkheaded forepeak up forward that acts as a chain locker. It's not the best place for much weight, so close to the bow, but there's not much choice. Aft of the chain locker comes the usual forecabin, dominated by a V-berth with stowage and tankage beneath it. If you're planning to sail a 26 around the world, you'd be better off with a workbench and more stowage space up there. You're not likely to want to cross an ocean with four people on board in a boat this small unless you're also interested in hair shirts and self-flagellation.

Aft of the V-berth there's a hanging locker to port and a head compartment to starboard. Then comes a split galley, a good way to provide decent working space for the cook in a boat of this size, although some people find it easier to cook in the usual place

under the main sliding hatch, where the light and ventilation are a lot better. On the Contessa, the stove and a top-opening icebox are to starboard, while the sink and counter space are to port. Aft of the galley there are settee berths on either side, the ends of which tuck under the cockpit seats. Removable companionway steps on the centerline give access to the engine compartment, and you can also get to the engine through a panel in the cockpit sole, but it's mighty cramped in there.

There are two large opening hatches on the later Taylor 26 models, one in the forecabin and another conveniently above the galley area. They help distribute light and air down below, but some people still find the living quarters of the 26 rather cavelike because there is no sliding hatch over the main companionway. Instead, the coachroof slopes up sharply at its after end to form what amounts to a half-round solid dodger, except that it doesn't extend aft over the cockpit. It looks like the back hoop of a prairie schooner. Some people call it a bubble, others call it a hump. Whatever it is, it's

***Rory and Carol  
Turnage's Wyvern,  
named after a 1600s  
Danish pirate ship, sits  
ready for launching on  
the Chesapeake Bay.***





**To spruce up the interior of their Contessa 26, Rory and Carol Turnage gutted Wyvern's cabin and began again: varnished teak, new lighting, new companionway steps, and new cushions.**

quirky. It makes the entrance to the cabin very strong and seaworthy, but it takes some getting used to.

### The rig

The rig is strong and simple — she's a single-spreader, masthead sloop with

**Roland Barth, author of *Cruising Rules*, enjoys Maine coastal time on his Contessa 26, Mare's Tail.**



fore and aft lower shrouds. The forestay is housed well inboard so you can sit down, wedge yourself in the pulpit facing aft, and handle the staysail from up forward if you need to.

The sail area is modest — the mainsail has an area of just 154 square feet. She's designed to take a No. 1 genoa of 251 square feet, a No. 2 genoa of 208 square feet, and a No. 3 genoa of 178 square feet. The working jib has an area of 126 square feet, and the storm jib is a very manageable 70 square feet.

The spars are anodized aluminum, the reefing is jiffy, and the mainsheet secures at the aft end of the cockpit. All very standard and well-tested. No surprises here.

### Performance

The Contessa 26's PHRF rating is 252, exactly the same as the Nordic

Folkboat and the Cape Dory 25D, which also are part of this series of articles. With her 21-foot waterline, her maximum sustained speed is a little over 6 knots, but of more importance for deepsea cruising is the fact that she'll reach a high percentage of her top speed fairly easily under sail, without being overpressed. That adds up to good daily runs and fast passages.

The design has proved docile and well mannered under all conditions. Tania Aebi proved that the Contessa 26 could be handled with perfect confidence by a 95-pound woman.

### Known weaknesses

- As on all boats with balsa-cored decks and coachroofs, watch out for hollow-sounding areas where water may have entered and begun the delamination process.
- Some owners have added a shoe to the aft end of the keel. It overlaps the bottom of the rudder and prevents stray lines from jamming between the rudder and the keel.
- Depending on the boat's fore-and-aft trim, the scuppers on the sidedecks may not be able to drain all the water that gathers there. Some owners have made new scuppers in better places.
- If you're venturing into stormy waters, you may want to beef up the rudder with a third pintle and gudgeon, just in case.

### Owner's opinion

B. J. Caldwell's *Mai (Miti) Vavau* was rolled over in the stormy Indian Ocean. One night, at midnight, with the tradewinds blowing at 40 knots, he

## We're looking for the Flicka, International Folkboat, and Pacific Seacraft 25 next

**Editor's note:** Now we're looking for Flicka, International Folkboat, and Pacific Seacraft 25 sailors. Sailors of these vessels, let us know if you've got photos of interiors, your boats at the dock, and especially of your boats under sail; old brochures and manuals; line drawings; owners' comments; or resources (organizations or vendors) which might be helpful to other sailors with your boats.

We will return all materials and savor the comments. We look forward to hearing from you! The Flicka is scheduled for our November issue, so the deadline is right away (Sept. 1). You've got until Nov. 1 if you've got a Folkboat (to run in our January issue) and until Jan. 1 if you've got a PS 25 (which will appear in our March issue).



# Tania recalls life with *Varuna*

Almost 12 years have gone by since the single-handed circumnavigation (*the awfully long and unshortenable descriptive title I've had to use so often in those years*) when I buckled the belt, finished up in New York, and moved ashore from *Varuna*. I lived for several months in my father's loft in Manhattan before moving to an apartment in Newport, R.I.; a co-op apartment in Brooklyn, N.Y.; and finally to my current home in Vermont where we have been living for the past four years. The anchor has dug in here. The roots reach deep into the rich brown dirt of these gentle, stationary hills where unpredictability and storms come from nature as much as from everyday life and people. I live here with my family: the husband I met with *Varuna* in the South Pacific, our two boys (Nicholas is 8, Sam is 5) and Tarzoon, the cat who sailed nearly halfway around the world with *Varuna* and me.


On every floor of our small, three-story rectangle with a roof, porch, and small office addition, there are pictures of *Varuna* swinging at anchor in idyllic coves, being knocked around by waves, or gracefully soaring over crests under sail. These are moments fixed in time . . . often moments that preceded a great crash and soaking from spray. There are also paintings, drawn from different pictures and imaginations, which were given to me over the years. And I still have a slide show I present to interested groups. The show is chock full of frozen frames from my days with *Varuna*. In every picture, a royal crown insignia on the mainsail identifies my little Contessa.

I remember her small winches, winch handles, sails, halyards, anchor chain, lifelines, dorade vents, and mast steps. They were dainty and manageable, very ladylike, a perfect Contessa. Her design has crossed many oceans with others — sailors undaunted by the smallness — or rather the petiteness, that belies the total ruggedness and endurance of her feminine lines. I can also remember how we worked together and how I often felt she was guarding my entire world and existence within her protection. She was a maroon dot steadily plugging across the heaving, watery vastness, from one safe harbor to the next. I had named her for the Hindu goddess of the cosmos, a name befitting such a lady.

Nowadays, I can't see any water from our house, and I like it like that. I do see it several times a year when I leave these green, brown, and white hills to teach others to sail on clumsier, bigger, more comfortable, faster, and drier charter

boats. Three or four times a year, on these 10-day international trips, I get my fixes of life on the water. Then I return to my house, Tarzoon, my husband, and my sons, who are teaching me new things every day. *Varuna* was my classroom, as the world ashore has been ever since our trip together. (In fact, I just graduated as an undergraduate and am thinking about continuing with school because I still like my classrooms. I will never forget the one who has had the biggest impact, the one who once helped to develop the standards that have been incorporated into my life.)

Not only was *Varuna* my teacher, she also was my ally, my foe, my nemesis and, ultimately, a dependable friend with some quirks to keep things interesting. *Varuna* was a regal, proud, indomitable, and forgiving teacher. She was also incredibly beautiful. As with the pride I now feel when driving up the driveway to my pretty shingled home with green trim and flowers, I once approached my first home by dinghy and along docks in harbors and anchorages around the world. She was beautiful, and she was mine, all 26 feet of slenderness and grace. I also haven't forgotten the price I paid for that beauty. For my house now, I pay taxes, mow the lawn, and tend the garden, but with *Varuna*, in addition to her maintenance needs, we took on the ocean. Literally. She was also 26 feet of submarine in anything above the gentlest of downwind breezes. But we always resurfaced.

*Varuna* taught me how to trust the resurfacing, how to stay afloat with aplomb and grace, even in the crappiest conditions. The one thing we can rely upon is the nature of change — in itineraries, plans, weather, and life in general. As I continue to grow, change, and navigate a course through time, picking my way across the meadows, ice, rocks, and water, I return home and continue to walk past the paintings and pictures hanging on the walls. I look at the little maroon dynamo, note the crown, and remember how much she once meant to me, how her importance in my life may have been replaced by other things, what she and that little crown once taught me, and how it will never be forgotten. 

*These days, Tania goes to sea as part of occasional educational charters. Call 888-994-7245 for information on upcoming trips to the Bahamas this November and Thailand in February, 2000.*

**The Turnages' Wyvern was launched in April, 1998.**





## In short

### Contessa 26/J.J. Taylor 26

**Designer:** David Sadler (1966)

**LOA:** 25 feet 6 inches

**LWL:** 21 feet 0 inches

**Beam:** 7 feet 6 inches

**Draft:** 4 feet 0 inches

**Displacement:** 5,400 pounds

**Sail area:** 280 square feet

**Ballast:** Encapsulated iron or lead

**Spars:** Aluminum

**Auxiliary:** 7-hp diesel

**Designed as:** Seaworthy racer/cruiser

## In comparison

- **Safety-at-sea factor:** 7 (Rated out of 10, with 10 being the safest.)
- **Speed rating:** PHRF 252. A good performer, particularly on long ocean passages.
- **Ocean comfort level:** One or two adults in as much comfort as might be expected in a two-tonner, which is not much.

## Continued from Page 12

heard the deafening roar of a breaking wave approaching from astern. An explosion engulfed the boat, he said, and she was rolled upside down. He found himself lying on the cabin roof inside the main saloon and praying for his boat to right herself.

As the ballast keel slowly pulled her back upright, he pulled out a hatchboard and scanned the deck for damage. Miraculously, he said, the mast was still up and in one piece, but the rest of the boat was in complete disarray.

Although it took him the rest of the night to restore order, the only permanent damage he found was a blown-out staysail and a broken solar panel. He faced another severe test when he rounded Cape Agulhas, also known as the Cape of Storms. In fact, southwesterly gales blowing over the fast-flowing Agulhas Current forced him back into port five times over a period of two months, but his boat survived without serious damage.

Tania Aebi also experienced her share of heavy weather and frights, but

**Wyvern displays that unusual hatchless companionway bubble or hump. The Turnages replaced her navigation lights; refinished all the exterior wood; scraped, sanded, and painted the bottom; sanded the hull; and painted it with Interlux.**

*Varuna* also escaped permanent damage. Both skippers were of the opinion that they could not have found a stronger, more seaworthy boat for the price.

## Conclusion

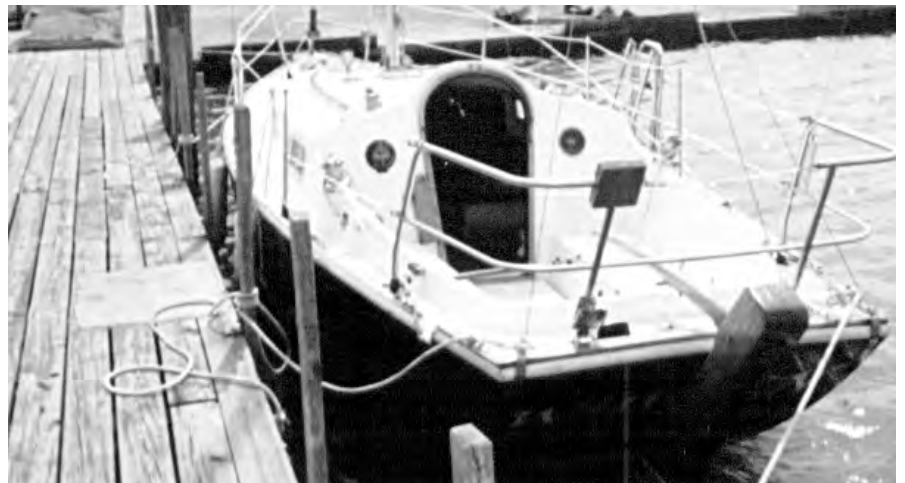
This is a Folkboat that has grown a little wider, a little longer, a little deeper, and a little heavier. She somehow doesn't look as delicately pretty as a Folkboat, but she's probably more seaworthy, if that's possible. Her trademark companionway hump makes for accommodation that resembles a badly lit, cramped dentist's waiting room — unless a large opening hatch has been fitted overhead — but it does provide reassuringly solid shelter and separation from bad weather.

If you're serious about cruising, and especially if you're a singlehander, this

boat will perform well and look after you when the chips are down. She's small enough to give you the feeling that you're always in control, but large and tough enough to survive really bad weather. For somewhere around \$15,000, you should be able to find one in reasonable condition. Good seaboats don't come much cheaper than that.

© John Vigor

*John's new book, Twenty Small Sailboats to Take You Anywhere, to be published by Paradise Cay (800-736-4509) later this year, will be available on Good Old Boat's bookshelf.*





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John Hojaboom's *Papillon* shows off the Dufour 27's clean, contemporary lines. It was one of the earlier boats to incorporate portlights in the topsides.

# Dufour Safari 27

*An example of innovative French style*

by Richard Smith

**F**rench naval architect Michel Dufour began designing yachts in the 1960s. Perhaps his best-known design is the elegant Arpège (1966), a 30-footer that performed well offshore and offered chic accommodations below. The 27-foot Safari (1969) followed, along with the Dufour 41 (1970) and the Dufour 35 (1971). In 1973, the Dufour yard built more than 600 boats, making it one of the largest production boatbuilders in the world. There followed a lull in exports to the U.S., but by the late 1990s Dufour Yachts had acquired the Dynamique and the well-known Gib'Sea brands and had resumed exports to this country. In addition to innovations in design, the Dufour approach included the extensive use of structural inner liners or pans that

cover the sides of the hull and also form the cabin sole and furniture.

I remember the Dufour 27 from my sailing days in the United Kingdom during the 1970s and '80s. Compared with tried and proven British designs — such as the venerable Westerlys, Macwesters, and Kingfishers — the Dufour 27 seemed to offer a departure from the commonplace and suggested the future of yacht design. There was something about the boat that earned a second glance.

## Design

The Dufour 27 has a raised flush deck — well, almost. Some have termed it “semi-flush.” A benefit of this configuration is relatively wide sidedecks. The almost-flat sheerline is enhanced

by a heavy aluminum extrusion that covers the hull-to-deck joint. Freeboard is unusually high, which results in a healthy reserve buoyancy but makes windage a concern.

The companionway hatch slides into a raised deckhouse that continues just beyond the mast. From some angles the hull looks as if the builders forgot the portlights. A closer inspection reveals that there are indeed portlights port and starboard . . . in the topsides. All this angling and tiering eases the appearance of the vertical bulk of the topsides.

The Dufour 27 has a raked and slightly concave stem and a reverse transom. The rudder is fitted to a deep and narrow skeg. The 1-ton iron keel is a swept-back parallelogram that's narrow in thickness

at the top and widens toward the base. It was offered in both a 5-foot 2-inch depth and a deeper version that drew 6 feet — unusual for a boat with a 20-foot 4-inch LWL. Like many boats built for sailing along European coastlines, where extreme tides mean deep water becomes thin very quickly, provision is made for the use of adjustable “sheer legs” that can extend from either side of the hull amidships to allow the boat to lie more or less upright when taking the ground.

## Construction

Production of the Dufour 27 began in 1974. Our review boat, *Papillon*, owned by John Hojaboom, is #314, launched in 1975. The hull is hand laminated with alternating layers of woven roving and mat. The deck is fiberglass cored with either balsa or polyurethane foam. Solid wood blocks are substituted where necessary to back up the generally robust deck hardware. Stainless-steel backing plates are used in mounting the genoa tracks and mainsheet traveler.

The large rubrail that covers the joint between hull and deck moldings was offered in teak or extruded and anodized aluminum. *Papillon's* is aluminum and John had it removed recently for inspection. Aside from the bonding sealant, little could be seen of how the hull and deck were fastened together. A visual inspection inside the boat revealed the whole assembly to be covered by fiberglass and all seemed tight and secure. There has been no distortion or leakage at the joint.

The 2,000-pound bulb keel is secured to the hull by 12 ½-inch stainless-steel bolts and covered with fiberglass. Some owners report slight periodic leakage at the joint; a survey should reveal any serious damage.

The berth foundations and other furniture are incorporated in the fiberglass interior pan molding. Another molding forms the overhead, cabin sides, and supports for handrails and light fixtures, making it impossible to tab the bulkheads to the underside of the deck.

Generally, the Dufour 27 appears to be well built, although 35 years of hard use can take its toll. For instance, John intends to stiffen (i.e., rebuild) the weakened hatch covers in the cockpit that show the strain of years of people jumping onto them from the raised deck. *Papillon's* plastic deck hatches and portlights are crazed and should be replaced.

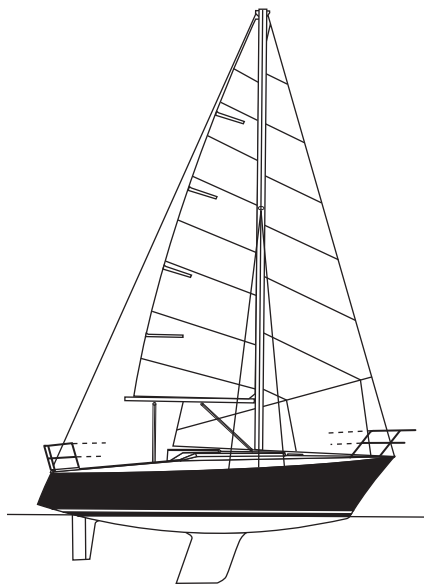


Deck details illustrate how Dufour applied production engineering ideas to boatbuilding.

Apart from these two examples of wear, her hull seems to be in fine shape.

## On deck

*Papillon's* deck is clean and workmanlike. There is no dodger. John prefers working with halyards at the mast to eliminate the hazards of stepping on lines led back to the cockpit. He also eschews roller-furling gear, preferring to bend on and change headsails and



## Dufour Safari 27

**Designer:** Michel Dufour  
**LOA:** 27 feet 3 inches  
**LWL:** 20 feet 4 inches  
**Beam:** 9 feet 2 inches  
**Draft:** 5 feet 2 inches (standard)  
**Displacement:** 5,300 pounds  
**Ballast:** 2,000 pounds  
**Sail area:** 310 square feet  
**Disp./LWL ratio:** 281  
**SA/Disp. ratio:** 16.3

maintain a familiarity with the foredeck. The molded-in non-skid is about average for grip. As a member of the Edmonds, Washington, Corinthian Yacht Club, John does a combination of racing and cruising and singlehands frequently.

For trimming sails, *Papillon* has two Lewmar 25 sheet winches and a small Enkes winch for the spinnaker. Another Enkes works the outhaul. All are single speed.

An anchor locker at the bow provides stowage for a 25-pound CQR, 20 feet of chain, and 150 feet of ½-inch nylon rode. A handy notch in the forward end of the hatch makes it possible to pay out the anchor tackle with the hatch closed. This provides good footing for the crew during the process. The 24-inch-high lifeline stanchions are seated in molded sockets and, together with their lifelines, are easily removable.

Four or five people can sit in close company in the cockpit, and the benches are long enough for two 6-footers to stretch out for a nap. Seats are a comfortable height above the sole and backs are high enough and angled just about right. The distance between benches provides good foot support for the helmsman when hard on the wind and heeling. A narrow bridge deck raises the companionway sill, stiffens the deck structure, and serves as a mounting base for the mainsheet traveler.

Cockpit storage is outstanding, about as big as I've seen in a boat of this length. The starboard under-seat storage is huge, with room for a well-packed inflatable boat. The port-side locker gives away some space to a hanging locker belowdecks but still provides good stowage as well as access to the 13-gallon fuel tank. The deep lazarette abaft the tiller allows inspection of the rudder stock, deck fill, fuel line, manual and electric bilge pumps, and cockpit-drain through-hulls. It also provides stowage for a Danforth anchor.

## The rig

The Dufour 27 is a masthead sloop. Standing rigging consists of a forestay and backstay, upper shrouds, plus forward and aft lower shrouds. There is a tension-adjustment wheel on the backstay.

When it came time for new sails, John had a new mainsail cut with a slightly more pronounced roach in order to get a little more area. He also added full-length



The galley, at left, is a single fiberglass module with the sink and a recess for a gimballed 2-burner stovetop molded in. The icebox is located under the stove area; side-opening boxes lose cold air much faster than top-opening boxes. The Dufour 27 has a surprising number of storage compartments for its size, including this handy locker aft of the port settee, above. An opening between the companionway steps, at right, allows a fire extinguisher to be discharged into the engine compartment without letting in a lot of oxygen.

battens. The slight shift in the center of effort hasn't affected the boat's balance. Sailing with a 150 percent genoa and spinnaker, John reports all-around improved performance. It's true: new sails make a huge difference in performance.

### Belowdecks

Although it's neatly contained and saves space, I found the companionway ladder on the Dufour 27 too vertical and the treads a bit too narrow for an easy drop onto the cabin sole. John says it just takes some getting used to.

The small galley is located to starboard of the ladder where there is about 6 feet 2 inches of headroom under the companionway slide. John replaced the original alcohol stove with a two-burner propane unit. This is located within the inner pan molding that also forms the icebox and an integral sink served by a foot pump. A door below the sink provides access to galley storage. The icebox is large, about 7 cubic feet, and unusual in design. Ice is dropped into a special hatch at the back, separate from the icebox itself. A nice French touch is the two deep built-in wells at the back for keeping white wine chilled.

Moving forward, headroom drops to just under 6 feet in the saloon. The starboard settee berth lies forward of the galley. Its foot is located under a hanging closet in the forward cabin. There's a slot above this opening for chart storage. Lifting the mattress reveals storage that includes two more wells, a good place for a couple of bottles of Bordeaux.

Opposite, on the port side of the saloon, a settee berth extends between

the companionway and head bulkheads. This berth converts to a double when the table is stowed against the bulkhead. When lowered, the table has a leaf that opens to serve four or five comfortably. A large translucent hatch lights the saloon and provides ventilation. Starting and house batteries are located under the port berth.

The settee backs are high and comfortable with the topside portlights affording good views out from the sitting position. Overhead handrails run along the length of the saloon. The sole is teak-and-holly-veneered plywood with hatches to access the bilge.

The head compartment is very tight. The Dufour 27 was originally delivered with a manual marine head but *Papillon* has been refitted with a portable toilet. There's a small swing-out sink. Opposite to starboard, a hanging locker provides the kind of minimal storage to be expected in a 27-footer.

In the forward cabin, headroom is about 5 feet 9 inches and the berths are about 6 feet long. A 24-gallon freshwater tank is located below the berths alongside considerable bulk storage. A small deck hatch lets in light and air through a translucent insert.

The general ambience of the Dufour 27 belowdecks is somewhere between a traditional interior and something a little different. The absence of conventionally located portlights in



cabin sides might bother some people, but the design made sense to me and I appreciated having eye-level views from a sitting position. This feature, a novelty in the '70s, has become a common and accepted arrangement. The translucent overhead hatches provide plenty of light in the interior, which has a good balance between teak paneling, the teak-and-holly sole, and areas of white gelcoat.

In addition to the under-berth stowage, there are fiddled shelves for books and miscellaneous gear in the saloon and forward cabin.

### The engine

*Papillon* was originally powered by a 10-hp Volvo Penta single-cylinder diesel. This was replaced by an 18-hp 3-cylinder Volvo Penta. At the same time, John replaced the 2-bladed folding prop with a 2-bladed fixed prop. To access the engine compartment it's necessary to remove the companionway steps and then the panel in line with the main bulkhead. The crankcase-oil dipstick and filler are right in front along with the water pump and other engine accessories, like the primary fuel filter, that require regular attention. Access to the oil filter is via the starboard cockpit locker.

In the event of an engine-room fire, a small and cleverly located door under the first companionway step allows a fire extinguisher to be directed at the engine while letting in a minimal amount of oxygen. A fire extinguisher is conveniently placed below the second step.

John is pleased with the performance of the new 3-cylinder engine and fixed 2-bladed prop in handling adverse



currents found in the many passages winding through his summer cruising grounds.

### Under way

John backed out of the slip smartly, then I took us out of the marina while he attended to the fenders, mooring lines, and sails. The engine was quiet and the tiller steering precise. Just outside the breakwater, John hoisted the sails and we were off in about 10 to 12 knots of wind and smooth seas. We managed the wakes of ferries and large powerboats with little fuss.

Dufour 27 owners differ in how they assess the boat's speed under sail. John confessed that, compared with that of other boats of her size, *Papillon's* performance is often disappointing. Be that as it may, I found her sprightly, with good acceleration. She came about smartly with little loss of speed. She was extremely well balanced and light on the helm even in the gusts, with no sign of weather helm. Once we were farther into Puget Sound, we encountered a light chop, but the boat was steady on the helm, holding her course well and taking large wakes in her stride. John reports he's taken water over the rail only on the more dire occasions when high winds were combined with freighter wakes.

Close-hauled, *Papillon* pointed very close to the wind without slowing down — a product, perhaps, of that deep fin keel and those fine new sails. She steered herself; too much movement of the tiller merely slowed her. With sheets eased, she stood up and purred right along.

Without a dodger, visibility was excellent, although in the congestion of that Saturday morning's Salmon Derby, ferry traffic, and power cruisers making upwards of 20 knots, I would have appreciated a window of sorts near the foot of the deck-sweeping genoa.

### Conclusion

After 35 years, this good old boat is almost as good as ever. Her dockside appearance is still as remarkable as when she was new; the Dufour 27 is clearly not a 21st-century boat but still unusual enough to get a second glance. Owners can be proud of this boat and the resolute appearance that continues to confound those with preconceived ideas about where sheerlines, cabin sides, and portlights should be.



Portions of the hull liners that make up the cabin sole foundation, berth foundations, and hull sides are visible in the forward part of the boat, above. Dufour used extensive and quite intricate internal liners, as a detail of the saloon overhead shows, below right. *Papillon* was repowered with a 3-cylinder Volvo Penta diesel, below left, and access to it is quite good.



Cruising for more than a week may be difficult for less hardy crews but she will respond well to carefully organized provisioning. Her cockpit stowage is well above average and stowage below is adequate for a well-disciplined crew. The promise of speed suggested by her lines may not be entirely realized, but her well-balanced good behavior under way, deep keel, and snug sail plan will be appreciated at times when others are looking to tuck in another reef.

A search of the Internet shows Dufour 27s listed from \$7,900 to \$9,500 depending on condition.



Donna Paden has posted extensive information about her Dufour 27, *Petite Cherie*, on her website <[http://web.mac.com/donnapaden/Dufour\\_27](http://web.mac.com/donnapaden/Dufour_27)> and I am indebted to her for the assistance she gave me as I was preparing this review. ♪

*Richard Smith, a contributing editor with Good Old Boat, is an architect. He specializes in designing and building very small houses and has built, restored, and maintained a wide variety of boats. These days, he and his wife, Beth, sail their Ericson Cruising 31, Kuma, on the reaches of Puget Sound.*

# Ericson 27

*Ruggedly built,  
conservatively styled*

by Gregg Nestor



**E**ricson Yachts began life in Costa Mesa, California. There, in the early 1960s, Ray Handy, along with several others, was building a Carl Alberg design from molds discarded by Pearson Yachts. In 1964, a pair of San Francisco Bay sailors, brothers Don and Gene Kohlmann, joined Handy's group and, as its guiding force, formed Ericson Yachts.

Naval architect Bruce King of Newport Beach, California, was soon commissioned to design the company's boats. Early on, this involved modifying a W.B. Crealock-designed 26-footer and a rework of the Alberg 35. After a few years, Ericson was producing original designs that ranged from 23 to

46 feet. For the most part, these were fairly heavily built family cruisers that often performed reasonably well in handicap racing.

In 1971, a holding company called the CML Group purchased Ericson and maintained its grip on the company for 13 years. Gene Kohlmann regained control in 1984, when CML offered Ericson stock to the public. The two brothers continued operating the company until 1990, when the business entered into Chapter 11 of the federal bankruptcy code. Pacific Seacraft then bought some of the molds, hired Gene as a vice president, and began producing Ericsons in 1991. Unfortunately, the older Ericson designs saw limited sales at Pacific Sea-

**Designed by Bruce King and introduced in 1971, the Ericson 27 still looks good today. Anemos, shown here, is a 1978 model owned by Jim and Teresa Schwiefert of Sandusky, Ohio.**

craft, and by mid-1999 production of the Ericson line was discontinued.

## Design

Bruce King designed the bulk of the Ericson line, including the Ericson 27. Introduced in 1971, the Ericson 27 remained in production for nine years, accounting for 1,302 units. In many ways, the Ericson 27 is a fine representative of the Ericson line of the 1970s.

A review of the numbers shows that the Ericson 27 is conservative in every respect. Its sail area/displacement ratio is 14.1, and its displacement/length ratio is 363. These figures suggest a boat that is a somewhat sluggish performer. This is confirmed by the Ericson 27's Performance Handicap Racing Fleet (PHRF) rating of 225 to 230 seconds per mile in fleets around the country. In comparison, a Pearson 26 rates 210 to 219, a Catalina 27 inboard rates 204, and a C&C 27 rates 200 to 210.

The boat's design was typical of the 1970s, yet it is still attractive today. The Ericson 27 has a flat sheer; the wide sheer stripe was a stylistic element also used by other builders. The moderate overhangs are the result of its fairly sharp entry and straight counter transom. For its length, the boat has a relatively high freeboard; however, the cambered coachroof minimizes the visual impact of this "awkwardness." Also, the lines of the coachroof blend pleasingly into the stemhead, adding to the overall harmony of the design.

In mid-1974 the Ericson 27 received a makeover. This included a redesigned deck as well as an upgraded interior. Regardless of the year of manufacture, the Ericson 27 was fitted with a rig of moderate height, a shallow-draft fin keel, and a spade rudder.

## Construction

Construction of the Ericson 27 is typical for its era. The hull and deck are hand-laid fiberglass and polyester resin composites. The hull is solid, while the

## “When compared to other production builders, Ericson Yachts enjoyed a reputation for good quality and finish.”

deck, cockpit, and coach house are a sandwich composed of two layers of fiberglass with an end-grain

balsa core. This gives these parts additional stiffness and also creates good insulation against sound and engine heat. The mounting bases for the primary winches are also of sandwich construction; however, marine-grade plywood is used in place of balsa as the core. Like most production boat builders, Ericson Yachts used a molded headliner and fiberglass pan that determine the placement of cabin features such as berths.

The hull-to-deck joint is an outward flange that's chemically bonded, mechanically fastened, and then covered with a protective two-piece rubrail.

The swept-back fin keel draws 3 feet 11 inches and incorporates 2,900 pounds of encapsulated lead ballast. A spade rudder is mounted on a 2 $\frac{3}{8}$ -inch-diameter stainless-steel shaft that rotates on bronze bearings with grease fittings. Its one-piece construction is made of a high-density polyurethane foam core covered with fiberglass.

When compared to other production builders, Ericson Yachts enjoyed a reputation for good quality and finish.

### Deck features

Except for a pair of outboard cleats and a small deck pipe leading to a chain locker in the forepeak, the Ericson 27's foredeck is clear of obstructions. Normally this would yield a large work platform on which to make sail changes and deploy/retrieve anchors. Not so. The boat's relatively sharp entry results in a narrow foredeck.

The sidedecks are a comfortable 14 inches wide and are bordered by a toe-rail and single lifelines that terminate at stainless-steel pulpits. Aggressive non-skid, outboard chainplates, and a pair of cabintop teak handrails measuring over 6 $\frac{1}{2}$  feet aid in fore-and-aft maneuverability.

Forward on the cabin trunk is a pair of small portlights. Only the starboard one, serving the head, opens. The other is fixed, as are the four larger portlights farther aft. On top there are

a sea hood and, depending upon the year of production, one or two opening hatches (one situated forward and possibly a second one aft of the mast).

Early Eriscon 27s featured a straight cockpit with tiller steering, an outboard engine for auxiliary propulsion, and a single overhead hatch. Around 1974, the entire boat was upgraded and the deck mold redesigned. This included a new T-shaped cockpit with wheel steering, an inboard engine, and a second overhead hatch.

*Anemos*, the review boat, is a 1978 model and it benefits from Ericson's mid-production upgrade. Its T-shaped

cockpit is physically split by an athwartship fiberglass bridge that conceals the attachment point for the emergency tiller and on which the traveler is mounted. The forward portion of the cockpit is without a bridge deck and easily accommodates four adults. Beneath the port cockpit seat is a deep sail locker that also houses the aluminum fuel tank. Aft of the 28-inch wheel and binnacle with engine controls is the helmsman's station, beneath which is access to the lazarette. Low and to port is the engine control panel, while aft and to starboard is the manual bilge pump. Directly behind the helm is the chainplate for the backstay and, farther aft, the centerline swim ladder.

### Belowdecks

Like the foredeck above it, the Ericson 27's V-berth is very narrow. Outboard are stowage cubbies and beneath is a pair of lockers. The forward locker is for gear, while the aft one houses the potable water and holding tanks. There are no access ports serving this compartment; a simple oval opening in the forward bulkhead offers the only access. Even though the forward hatch straddles this bulkhead, above the V-berth and the head, the cabin is quite dark and lacks good ventilation.

Following aft and to port of the V-berth is a hanging locker with a bureau top. To starboard is a generously sized head compartment. It contains a stainless-steel sink with manual cold water and a fore-and-aft facing toilet. This configuration makes using the facilities a lot more comfortable than athwartship toilets, especially when the boat is heeled. The opening portlight and part of the forward hatch provide ventilation and natural illumination. A solid two-panel door provides privacy. In an attempt to encourage air movement, both the forward bulkhead and the door to the head terminate a few inches from the overhead.

The saloon features the traditional opposing settee/berth arrangement with bulkhead-mounted drop-leaf



### Ericson 27

**Designer:** Bruce King  
**LOA:** 26 feet 9 inches  
**LWL:** 20 feet 6 inches  
**Beam:** 9 feet 0 inches  
**Draft:** 3 feet 11 inches  
**Ballast:** 2,900 pounds  
**Displacement:** 7,000 pounds  
**Sail area:** 323 square feet  
**Displ./LWL ratio:** 363  
**SA/Displ. ratio:** 14.1





table. There are fiddled bookshelves outboard, with stowage beneath and behind all settees/berths. Both the house and starting batteries are located beneath the starboard settee. The port settee is 6 feet long, while the starboard settee and the quarter berth each measure 6 feet 3 inches. Five fixed portlights and an overhead hatch provide light and air. Wooden grabrails run the length of the saloon.

The L-shaped galley is to port and includes a single stainless-steel sink with manual cold water (foot pump), a two-burner alcohol cooktop with cutting board cover, and an icebox that drains to the bilge. For stowage of provisions and galleyware, there are several drawers, a shelf, a built-in dish rack, and a locker with sliding doors.

Depending upon the year of pro-

duction, the Ericson 27's interior is either mahogany or teak veneer on marine-grade plywood. The mahogany will most likely be oiled; the teak, varnished. Regardless of species, both finishes are above average. Headroom is 6 feet 1 inch, and the sole is non-skid fiberglass with mahogany or teak access panels.

### The rig

The Ericson 27 is a masthead sloop with deck-stepped mast that has an air draft of 36 feet 4 inches (38 feet 2 inches, if fitted with the tall rig). Belowdecks, there is a solid wood compression post. Rigging is a pair of cap shrouds, incorporating a single pair of spreaders, fore and aft lower shrouds, a headstay, and a backstay. On earlier boats that featured tillers,

a split backstay was installed; however, after the 1974 redesign, Ericson switched to a single backstay. All halyards are sheaved externally and may either be stainless steel with braided Dacron tails (early models) or all-rope braided Dacron (post-1974). A pair of single-speed Barlow #16s or equivalent halyard winches is mounted on the mast. *Anemos* is fitted with a pair of Lewmar #8s.

A mainsail and a 120-percent lapper were standard. Optional sails included a working jib in addition to 150-percent and 170-percent genoas. The mainsail came with a single set of reef points and jiffy reefing. On earlier boats, the main was sheeted mid-boom to a traveler mounted over the companionway. This configuration was later abandoned for a cockpit-mounted traveler and end-boom sheeting, which is much more desirable.

Depending upon the size of the headsail, its sheets can be led aft through fairleads on one of two sets of tracks. Sheets of small sails

**The starboard quarter berth, above left, makes a good sea berth — nice and tight! *Anemos* is equipped with a Yanmar diesel engine, above center; access is better than on many boats. The V-berth is quite narrow forward, and the only access to the tiny forepeak is through a hole in the bulkhead, above right. On facing page: The toilet is positioned fore and aft in the head compartment, an uncommon arrangement.**

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“... the combination of the boat’s off-center prop shaft and angled rudder shaft requires the helmsman to pay constant attention.”

requires the helmsman to pay constant attention.

**Things to check out**

Regardless of the year of production, the Ericson 27 is a well-built boat. As such, when searching the used boat market, problems encountered tend to be cosmetic rather than structural. Common complaints include inadequate icebox insulation, leaking portlights, a single backstay that interferes with the helmsman, and gate valves on through-hulls.

With more than 1,300 hulls delivered, there’s always a selection of used boats available. Boats that have benefited from the 1974 redesign are more desirable. They have wheel steering, an upgraded interior, and a reconfig-

ured deck that includes a second hatch for improved ventilation, plus a more efficient cockpit. Of course, routine maintenance and periodic upgrades also impact desirability and price.

**Conclusion**

The Ericson 27 is a ruggedly built and conservatively styled cruising boat. Its moderate size and reasonable amenities make it a good candidate for a cruising couple to consider. It’s not a speedster and it does have its drawbacks, but if properly maintained and outfitted, it will hold its value. Prices for earlier models range from \$7,500 to \$12,000, while post-1974 boats are priced at \$8,000 to \$15,000. *▲*

follow aft to short sidedeck-mounted tracks, while those of larger genoas are led to much longer toerail-mounted tracks. The sheets terminate at coaming-mounted primary winches and cleats. On *Anemos*, the primaries are the single-speed Lewmar #8s.

**Under way**

As evidenced under way by its heavy displacement-to-length ratio and its short rig, the Ericson is much more of a cruiser than a racer. In an attempt to enhance its performance, a tall rig was developed. Unfortunately, this extra 2 feet made no significant improvement and negatively impacted the boat’s stability. Only a very few boats were delivered with the taller mast. When the breeze freshens, the boat tends to develop significant weather helm. Those boats with wheel steering are much more enjoyable to steer than those equipped with tillers.

While originally designed for an outboard motor, more than 80 percent were delivered with inboard engines. Over its nine years of production, Ericson used a variety of engines and manufacturers. These included the venerable Atomic 4 gas engine and Westerbeke, Volvo, and Yanmar diesels. *Anemos’s* auxiliary is a Yanmar YSM8. This is a single-cylinder, 8-hp, raw-water-cooled diesel engine. Access to the engine for routine maintenance is very good. When under power, the combination of the boat’s off-center prop shaft and angled rudder shaft



# Frances 26/

*They roam the world's oceans*

**T**HE BRITISH MANUFACTURERS of Frances 26 sloops managed to characterize them perfectly in remarkably few words: "They routinely roam the world's oceans." Enough said, old chap.

In fact, the Frances 26 has an Anglo-American heritage, for she was designed by one of America's best-known smallboat architects, Chuck Paine.

Morris Yachts, of Maine, originally built the Frances as the Morris 26 — about 35 to 40 of them came off the production line there. In total, about 200 were constructed professionally, and about 40 more have been built by amateurs from sets of plans — still available, incidentally, from Chuck Paine's design office in Camden, Maine.

Until recently, the boat was offered by Victoria Yachts, in Hampshire, England, but at the current time there is no manufacturer building the boat from the molds which are reportedly resting unused in a field in Holland. If you want one of these gems your choices are to buy a used one, build one, or have one built as a one-off from the plans.

Significantly, the Frances 26 was designed by Chuck Paine for his own use. She was, in fact, his first design as an independent naval architect, and she had to be capable of cruises from Maine to the West Indies and back crossing the unpredictable Gulf Stream. She also had to be capable of being sailed by only one or two persons.

For his own comfort and safety, Chuck chose a traditional, long-keeled hull with moderately heavy



displacement, an outboard rudder, and short ends. It's interesting that so many designers who plan to cross oceans in their own boats choose that time-tested formula, no matter how many fancy fin and skeg boats they draw for others.

This boat is almost a starved Colin Archer, except that her sternpost is straight, not curved, and the forward end of her keel is cut away slightly for better maneuverability, less drag, and better directional stability downwind. Chuck Paine says the cutaway also stops her from developing weather helm.

Although many of these small voyagers are now routinely roaming the world's oceans, you won't find many used ones for sale on the open market. At the time of this writing, Morris Yachts was advertising four for sale from \$38,000 upward. But this is the kind of boat owners tend to hang on to for life, so when they do come up for sale they're quickly snapped up by savvy sailors who've been waiting in the wings for their

keel. Such a high ratio is rarely seen in a cruising boat, but it argues well for her ultimate stability. Should she ever be rolled over by a rogue wave (and that possibility should never be dismissed no matter the size of the yacht) she will undoubtedly regain her feet very swiftly, probably before too much water has found its way down below.

Her hull is solid, hand-laid fiberglass, made to Lloyd's specification. The gelcoat was colored according to the owner's choice. The fiberglass deck has a core of balsa wood, except in those places where fittings are bolted through — there the core is a more substantial material known (appropriately enough) as coremat.

Each end of the hull is pointed and joined by a full-length keel of traditional proportions, modified slightly (as if the designer were making a nodding concession to modernity) by removing a thin crescent from its forward edge.

The freeboard is generous but cunningly lessened visually by what

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**Brewer and Lynn Ezzell sailed their 1978 Morris 26, *Blackberry*, in North Carolina waters before selling her for an Endeavor 42.**

chance to pounce. Better get in line.

## **Basic design**

One unusual aspect of this boat's design is the amount of weight she carries on her keel. The ratio of ballast to displacement is 51 percent. In other words, more than half the total weight of the boat resides in her ballast



# Morris 26

**Greg and Jane Pusch sail their 1983 Morris 26, ff, near Massachusetts. She had an extensive refit in 1996, so Greg thinks of her as a "1996 good old boat."**

is called a "gunwale styling line." And yes, she has proper gunwales, capped by a solid teak toerail.

Her coachroof is high, angular, and truncated. It stops short of the mast, and by rights ought to look unflatteringly boxy. For some reason though (perhaps because of its deep crown or the shape of its ports), it earns the epithet "purposeful"

rather than the disparagement "ugly." In any case, it provides full standing headroom in the main cabin below, which is no mean trick on a 26-footer.

This is one of the last remaining boats provided with the cruiser's friend, a proper samson post on the foredeck. Nothing is more convenient for mooring lines, anchor lines, and towing lines, yet fewer and fewer modern sailors ever get the chance to test its virtues against the inadequately sized and awkwardly placed deck cleat that has become the mediocre standard.

The sliding hatch over the companionway is made of  $\frac{3}{8}$ -inch thick acrylic plastic material. It slides on brass runners inside a fiberglass turtle, or sea hood, that prevents heavy water from finding its way under the hatch into the accommodations.

Teak coamings surround the modestly sized, self-bailing cockpit, which has a vented locker for propane gas and a large lazarette aft. The tiller



*by John Vigor*

find down below? Their coachroofs, or lack of them, reflect the status quo in the eternal battle between the hedonists, who insist on comfort below, and the Spartans, who are happy to suffer for good looks.

A handful of Franceses were built with a raised deck amidships. They are very sleek, very pretty, but they offer no standing headroom below. They make Spartans very happy indeed. The majority (*and those pictured here -Ed.*) have a raised coachroof to

open up the accommodations, and while some of them have a jaunty, truncated cabintop (an uneasy truce, but acceptable to both armies) others have a coachroof that extends forward of the mast in total surrender to the hedonists.

In a refit there's wonderful scope for redesigning the interior. If you very sensibly decide that four berths are two too many for this boat, you can get rid of those rarely-used V-berths and put something more useful in their place. And if you simply can't live without a double berth, it's easy to make an extension berth from one of the settees in the saloon.

The galley, the head, and the chart table, like movable feasts, are to be found all over the place on various boats. You can, in fact, squeeze four full-sized berths into this hull and still have room for all the rest, but if you're planning to sail single- or doublehanded, as the majority of long-term cruisers do — you will probably prefer to have fewer bunks

sweeps the aft end of the cockpit but without getting in the way too much. A more inconvenient obstacle is the mainsheet, which attaches to a dead-eye on the bridgedeck. Even at the cost of some efficiency, the mainsheet might better be sheeted to a horse spanning the pulpit, as it was on the original Franceses.

You'll find all kinds of power plants in the Franceses, ranging from 5 to 25 hp, but the standard engine was a diesel, the freshwater-cooled Volvo Twin 2010, which develops 10 hp. That's slightly more power than the 3-hp per ton often recommended for modern cruisers, but it certainly won't be too much in heavy weather.

Victoria Yachts commendably went to some trouble to reduce noise by lining the engine compartment with an insulating foam that incorporates a lead barrier.

## Accommodations

Since most of these boats have been built to the requirements of individual owners, who knows what you might

and more specialized accommodations for cruising with two.

### The rig

The rig is another area in which variations abound. You can find masthead sloops, 7/8ths-rigged sloops, and cutters with a bowsprit. Victoria Yachts supplied a thoroughly modern, silver-anodized mast, stepped on deck with airfoil spreaders and an internal conduit to keep electrical wires from slapping around inside the mast and driving you crazy.

The boom, also silver-anodized, has a built-in groove for the mainsail foot boltrope and an internal reefing system for two slab reefs. There's a special winch to aid jiffy reefing and a fancy casting near the gooseneck with four built-in jammers for the reef lines and the clew downhaul.

The sail area, incidentally, is exactly 30 square meters, or 327 square feet, with a slight majority of it in the mainsail so the headsails can more easily be managed by short-handed crews. If you're familiar with the old International 30-Square Meter class, you will be fascinated by the fact that the same sail area that drives those glamorous, but malnourished, 40-foot racers so quickly and

efficiently is needed to push the sturdy Frances 26 along in rather more prosaic fashion.

### Performance

This is a seakindly boat, as comfortable in broken water as any 26-footer can be expected to be and more seaworthy than most. Her pointed stern will win the approval of many traditionalists who believe that it parts following seas as does the stern of a lifeboat and thus makes the hull more seaworthy. Even those who scoff at such a theory on the grounds that if a big wave is going to come over the stern, a pointed end won't stop it, must agree that it is pretty to look at.

Her performance to windward will depend to some extent on the rig: a masthead sloop with a hanked-on foresail will probably do best because the size of the headsail is important. It's more efficient than the mainsail, area for area, because it is not affected by the power-wasting vortices spawned by the mast.

She's a little shallow-drafted for premium performance on the wind, so she'll need to be sailed a bit freer and a bit more upright in heavy sea conditions, but in light or moderate weather she might surprise a few competitors. Like most full-keel boats, she comes into her own as you ease her off the wind, and there's no reason why she shouldn't notch up some pretty respectable daily runs on an ocean passage.

### Known weaknesses

- **Expense.** Custom built new, or used, this is not a cheap boat. If she's well maintained, though, she could make a safe, solid investment because there always seem to be more people looking for used boats of this type than there are examples available.
- **Lack of availability.** If you want a used one, you'll probably find there are fewer than half-a-

dozen for sale in the U.S. at any time. You may have to find one yourself and haunt the owner until he or she sells her to you.

### Owner's opinion

In this case, the owner's opinion is the designer's, too. Chuck Paine's original Frances, named for a friend in London, had a 7/8th sloop rig for no better reason than the fact that it looked pretty. For the same reason, she also had a flush deck instead of a raised cabintop.

Chuck calls her a mid-Atlantic boat. "I wanted to combine the qualities of the best of British and American design," he says, and she has, in fact, appealed to people on both sides of the Atlantic."

He designed her as a deepsea voyager with ruggedness, character, and good looks. She had to be small enough to suit a modest budget but large enough to survive at sea. But it was his concern with seaworthiness that was paramount. That's one of the reasons he gave her a whopping 51-percent ballast ratio.

"She has very positive capsizing numbers," he says, "She can heel a very long way over before she reaches her limit of positive stability."



The interior of *Blackberry* is one of many possible custom configurations. Standing headroom on those 26-footers with a raised coachroof is a definite plus.





The Ezzells' *Blackberry* is almost as pretty out of the water as she is in her element. Notice the aft samson post at left, the aft lazarette, and the tiller sweep. The mainsheet attaches to the bridgedeck, center. At bottom, *Blackberry*, previously known as the *Pearla B*, shows off her Chuck Paine lines.

To the uninitiated it may seem paradoxical, but despite all this weight hanging from her keel, Frances is a little tender initially. Many of the most seaworthy yachts share this tendency to heel quite easily to 10 or 15 degrees, and then suddenly stiffen up, refusing to heel further until the wind really starts to blow seriously. The reward for this lack of initial stability is increased ultimate stability, a feature that should be borne in mind by every prospective ocean sailor. If she's ever hurled upside down by a giant wave, Frances will bob upright again promptly. A very stiff boat, one that gains her initial stability from wide beam, will take much longer to recover, and may even sink before she does.



You don't have to worry about the cockpit being too big on this boat, either. "It's small," says Chuck, "it's safe for ocean cruising."

If you're sailing a sloop-rigged Frances under all plain sail when the wind starts to rise, you should first reef the mainsail, he advises. If you're sailing the cutter, however, with a roller furling headsail on the bowsprit, you should roll up the Yankee completely and hang on to the staysail.

The idea is to lessen her angle of heel as much as to keep her helm balanced. In fact, Frances does not seem to suffer from weather helm. "She's the most beautifully balanced boat of her type that I have ever sailed," Chuck says, throwing modesty to the winds.

"She's not as bad to windward as you might suspect, either, especially





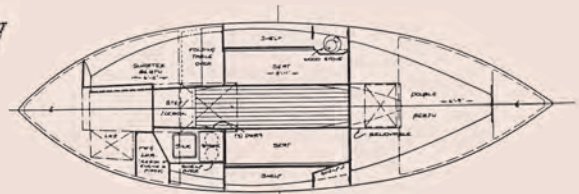
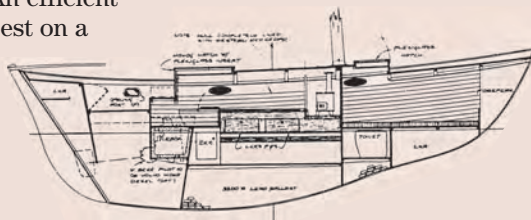
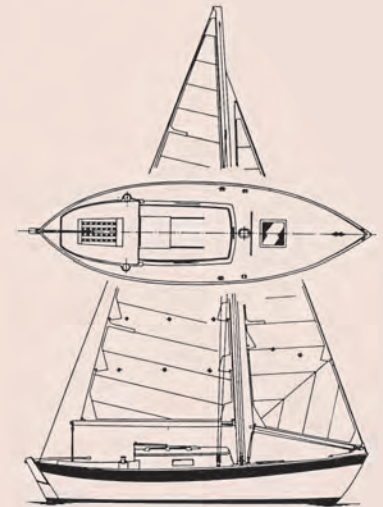
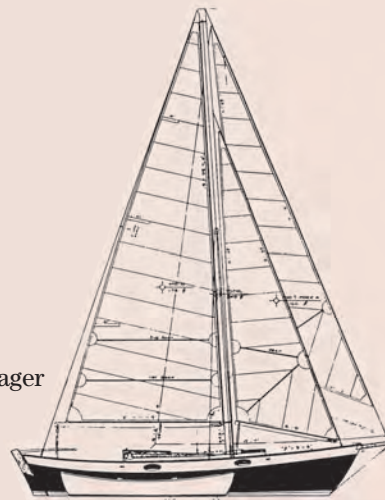
## In short

### Frances 26/Morris 26

**Designer:** Chuck Paine  
**LOA:** 26 feet 0 inches  
**LWL:** 21 feet 3 inches  
**Beam:** 8 feet 2 inches  
**Draft:** 3 feet 10 inches  
**Displacement:** 6,800 pounds  
**Sail area:** 327 square feet  
**Ballast:** 3,500 pounds  
**Spars:** Anodized aluminum  
**Auxiliary:** Volvo 10 hp diesel  
**Designed as:** Easily managed ocean voyager

## In comparison

- **Safety-at-sea factor:** 8 (Rated out of 10, with 10 being the safest.)
- **Speed rating:** An efficient performer but best on a reach.
- **Ocean comfort level:** One or two adults in reasonable comfort.



in moderate weather, but her best point of sail is a reach, anything from a close reach to a broad reach. Dead downwind, like any small boat of this type, she rolls."

## Conclusion

Like many a jewel, she was costly for her size, but she brings a great deal of pleasure for a very long time. Even if money is an object, there are very good

reasons for buying this sweet but tough little boat. There are no new boats available at the moment, except by having them custom built, which is expensive. This boat has a very high displacement-to-length ratio, which is exactly what her design type calls for. Compare her to other boats of similar displacement, not similar length on deck.



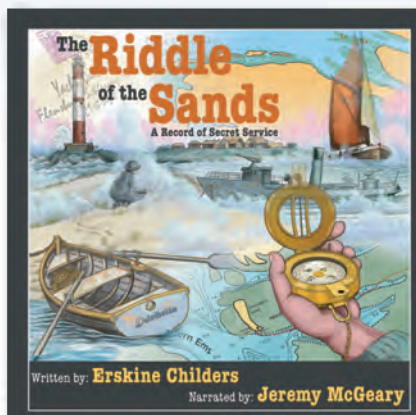
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**The Puschs' *If* is a "short cabin trunk" version of the Frances/Morris 26. Notice the "gunwhale styling line" which seems to visually reduce the high freeboard. Pretty as a picture, these boats are known to be seakindly ocean vessels.**





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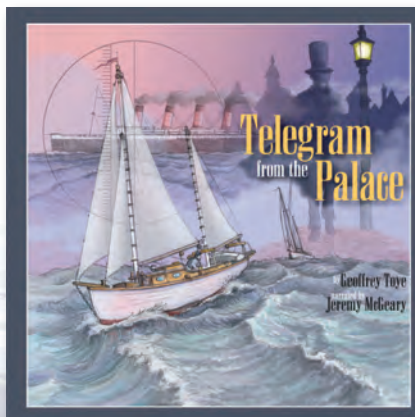
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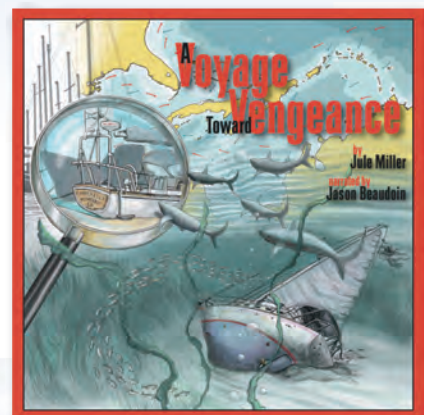
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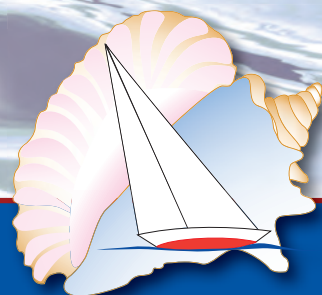
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by Jule Miller

Missing persons, murder, sunken vessels, unlikely comrades, and a couple of real sociopaths will frighten and entertain the adult listener of this nautical fiction by Jule Miller. There are plenty of realistic sailing scenes and good nautical detail but not enough to prevent the non-sailor from appreciating the tale. Readers will find it difficult to sleep at night. For adults only.







# Freedom 25

*An unconventional catboat  
with the advantages of small size*

by Ed Lawrence

**A**LLOW ME TO INTERJECT AN OPINION in search of a premise: it is easier to travel from the cockpit to the bow on a 25-footer than on a 70-footer. And it is easier to tack or furl a 150-percent genoa on a 25-footer than on the same Big Boat, especially when the wind is blowing more than 15 knots.

I could go on, but you get the drift: most tasks are more easily completed on small boats than on big boats. And one more thing: getting from Point A to Point B when they are 500 miles apart is more easily accomplished at 55 miles per hour with a boat on a trailer when compared to spending the time necessary to outfit the boat, make the passage via water, and work out the return trip.

So small boats are more easily handled, boats with small headsails are easier to sail, and trailerable boats may present the opportunity to explore faraway vistas.

Garry Hoyt was making these points in the late 1970s, just prior to introducing the Freedom 25, a catboat that makes sailing easy, even for beginners.

Of overlapping headsails, Garry says, “Genoas are one of the major reasons that sailing is more difficult than it need be. Their size makes them difficult to trim. Their size often doesn’t match wind strength, which requires cumbersome sail changing. Off the wind, their shape is necessarily poor.”

## Hoyt brainstorms

Among early (patented) brainstorms that became reality are the Hoyt jib boom, a rotating bowsprit, and the single-line reefing system that’s been pirated by anyone who can buy four blocks and some string.

Garry defied convention when he introduced the Freedom 40 in 1977. Designed by Halsey Herreshoff, the long, skinny ketch featured unstayed masts, nothing new to East Coast fishermen. As a pilot, Garry asked, “If old airplanes had wires supporting wings, but new ones don’t, why doesn’t the same logic apply to masts?” Good question.

The result: production models of Garry’s Freedom 40 and 44 with unstayed carbon fiber masts and



wraparound sails. The boat had no engine. Garry called an auxiliary engine a “Freudian fixation, a petroleum boo-boo.” Instead, he fitted the boat with 16-foot sweeps. He was not alone in his thinking. Hinterholler Yachts produced more than 850 Nonsuch catboats between 1979 and 1991, and Tom Wylie’s WylieCat 30 has been produced in limited numbers since the mid-1980s.

It was therefore no surprise that, when Garry introduced the Freedom 25 catboat in 1981, it also featured an unstayed rotating airfoil mast, a fully battened mainsail, a fin keel, and a spinnaker that shoots from a tube with a pole that mounts like a gun on the bow pulpit.

Garry says, “The airfoil wing was aerodynamically engineered to produce less drag than conventional stayed masts and to optimize airflow over the sail. Its ability to rotate freely means maximum power on every point.” Under sail, it did require a bit of tinkering, however. Catboats are

along with a nearly plumb bow and a plumb stern, combine to produce a good-looking sailboat. She’s a sweetheart.

### Deck layout

Without a forest of wire supporting the mast; minus a genoa and its halyard, sheets, and furling lines; and with the mainsail halyard and controls led to the cockpit, there’s not a heckuva lot involved in sailing the Freedom 25. In fact, given a tiller manager of some sort or an autopilot, the crew’s major time-filler may be agreeing on a menu or watching for traffic.

Comfortable seats that provide room for two bodies on each side of the footwell are 20 inches deep, and have 20-inch-tall backrests. The mainsail traveler is mounted atop the companionway, so it does not compromise the space.

The tiller can be secured out of the way, allowing the dining table to be relocated to the cockpit for dining under the stars.

“...there’s not a heckuva lot involved in sailing the Freedom 25... the crew’s major time-filler may be ... watching for traffic.”

best sailed with the mainsail sheeted with the leech to weather to overcome weather helm. To achieve that, the boom is sheeted to weather while the mast rotates to leeward where — when properly aligned to the elements — it is sheeted in place by a “mast tiller,” a line led aft to a cleat.

The power of the rig, however, eventually became its undoing. “It was more troublesome,” Garry says, “because, even with sails down, the mast would make way, which wasn’t always desirable. So they were more difficult to dock. And they would sail when on a moorage. So we came up with a more customer-oriented, fixed mast.” These were built into more than 50 percent of the boats produced.

Often overlooked in the dialogue regarding the perceived idiosyncrasies of the Freedom (and those of her designer), is that the Freedom 25 is a looker. Her tall rig, matched with an aft-sloping cabintop and sheerline,

Since there’s little reason to go forward, the 10 lines on the bow that manage the spinnaker and patented Hoyt Gun Mount are of little concern. Nonetheless, while going forward I learned that I’d have to become used to not having shrouds available as handholds. No matter, she’s fitted with lifelines and 24-inch-long teak handrails on both sides of the cabintop.

### Belowdecks

For the same reason that it is not necessary to move 40-some feet from cockpit to bow on this 25-footer, crew won’t become short of breath belowdecks when traveling from the companionway to head and V-berth.

Interior spaces are highlighted by ash joinery accented with oak trim. The cabin sole is teak-and-holly plywood. The highlights of the main cabin, one not-so-vast space with enough headroom for a five-footer, are settees port and starboard long



On facing page, *Tomcat*, a Freedom 25, is proudly sailed by her new owner, Tim Blanchard, and her former owner, Tom Cawrse. Remove the mast-supporting stays, the jib and its associated sheets and halyards, and lead all remaining lines to the cockpit. What have you got? *Freedom* to enjoy the scenery and to maintain a lookout for other boats. Also on facing page, *Tomcat*'s proud name, the mast tiller for the rotating mast, and Garry Hoyt's Gun Mount spinnaker pole. This page, the interior is uncluttered and simple with ash joinery and oak trim.





## Boat review



enough to seat four adults in a very upright position. In use, the portable dining table is fastened to the companionway steps. That complicates movement to the cockpit at mealtime, but the table is sturdy enough to support the weight of an adult.

Surrounded by wood joinery and accented by a bronze freshwater pump, the galley looks particularly yachty, despite being Lilliputian. An 11- x 13-inch stainless-steel sink provides a place to store dirty dishes and a two-burner alcohol stove provides a place to heat beans. A cooler is stored at the companionway.

The aforementioned settees extend aft under the cockpit and widen into quarter berths measuring 6 feet 6 inches that could be used as double berths if the occupants were paying very close attention to their caloric intake or were very well acquainted. At the least, she'll sleep four, with skipper and bunkmate in a 6-foot 6-inch V-berth in the bow.

Garry Hoyt's reputation extends to holding portable potties in great disdain. To that end, he fitted the Freedom 25 with an enclosed head plumbed to a holding tank with overboard bypass for use offshore. It would be unfair, however, to compare this space to a head on a 70-footer.

### Construction

Freedom sailboats were constructed by Tillotson-Pearson Inc. (TPI) to which Garry eventually sold his company. TPI has been on the cutting edge of fiberglass construction for the three decades that began in the 1970s. As a result, these boats have aged gracefully.

The hull is finished with gelcoat, under which is a hand-laminated fiberglass structure. Both hull and deck are cored with balsa, which offers a

lighter structure than solid fiberglass, with similar rigidity but a quieter ride. The hull-to-deck joint is an inward-turned flange sealed with 3M 5200 adhesive and bolted through the teak toerail. That's a method still being used by most manufacturers in 2005. Her outboard rudder is fitted with pintles and gudgeons beefy enough for a 30-footer.

The external fin keel is bolted into



### Freedom 25

**Designer:** Garry Hoyt  
**LOA:** 25 feet 8 inches  
**LWL:** 20 feet 0 inches  
**Beam:** 8 feet 6 inches  
**Draft:** 4 feet 5 inches  
**Displacement:** 3,500 pounds with engine/3,800 pounds without engine  
**Sail area:** 260 square feet  
**Ballast:** 1,025 pounds  
**Tankage:** 10 gal. fuel, 10 gal. water, 10 gal. holding tank

a deep sump, using the same method TPI employed on J/Boats. While she's lightweight and easy to haul on a trailer, the Freedom 25 is a fin-keel boat which must be hauled and launched by a lift or crane, limiting her utility as a trailerable weekender.

Like any boat constructed in the era, she's worthy of close annual inspection and maintenance. That deck fittings may leak is a reality to be faced, so cored sections should be examined for sponginess. The bedding compounds used in 1981 are not of the quality found in a chandlery today, so there's always the possibility of leaks at ports and the hull-to-deck joint. However, owners of 25-year-old boats report few failures.

### Performance

Ultimately, the Freedom 25 is about Garry Hoyt's desire to produce a boat that sails quickly and easily. This she does. With the assistance of the new owner, Tim Blanchard, and former owner, Tom Cawrse, I was aboard for a short sail on Seattle's Lake Washington in dying breezes.

No problem. She was underway seconds after removing the sail cover and marched smartly across the lake in 4 to 5 knots of wind. My guess is that speed ranged between 4.5 and 5.5 knots on a tight reach. Owners say she'll maintain speeds of 4.5 to 6 knots comfortably in up to 15 knots of wind, at which point they tuck in a reef.

Lacking jib sheets, tacking and jibing are as simple as putting the helm over. The major shortcoming of a catboat, however, is an inherent inability to point close to the breeze. Garry's solution: "Hoist a vestigial triangle-shaped sail on the spinnaker halyard, and performance will improve measurably." I'll take his word for it.

Sadly, many casual sailors view

The interior offers headroom for a five-footer, straight-backed settees port and starboard, sleeping arrangements for four, a Lilliputian galley, and an enclosed head. The removable dining table is fastened to the companionway steps, a complication for movement back and forth to the cockpit during mealtime.

hoisting a spinnaker as an action akin to going to sleep on a railroad track. In most cases that fear can be eliminated by a competent instructor, two or three additional crewmembers, and practice.

Garry describes this condition as "spinnakerphobia," a condition that "has kept more shorthanded cruisers clutching the stern than mal de mer." The alternative, he says, is his Gun Mount, "which is drastic, but utterly painless."


Taking this medicine requires removing from your memory banks the vision of a spinnaker pole, spinnaker sheets, and guys. The replacement is a 16-foot pole that slides through a

swiveling sleeve (the mount) atop the bow pulpit.

Setting the spinnaker is a simple matter of attaching the tack and clew of the spinnaker to sheets at each end of the pole and hoisting the sail. To accomplish this you don't leave the cockpit.

Once aloft, the sail is trimmed or doused by merely pulling the pole into the proper position and releasing sheets or guys from the cockpit. Get it? It is ingenious and perhaps easier to deal with than a bowsprit and asymmetrical sail. I'll admit that it took me a few minutes to fully understand the concept but, having done that, I'm convinced.

### Conclusion

So in the final analysis we have a boat that's easy to sail under main alone, even in light air... a boat that will go to weather with the addition of a Dacron napkin in front of the main... a boat that will go very fast under spinnaker... a boat that can be easily singlehanded or sailed by grampa and gram. 

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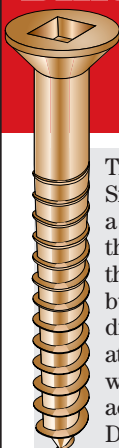
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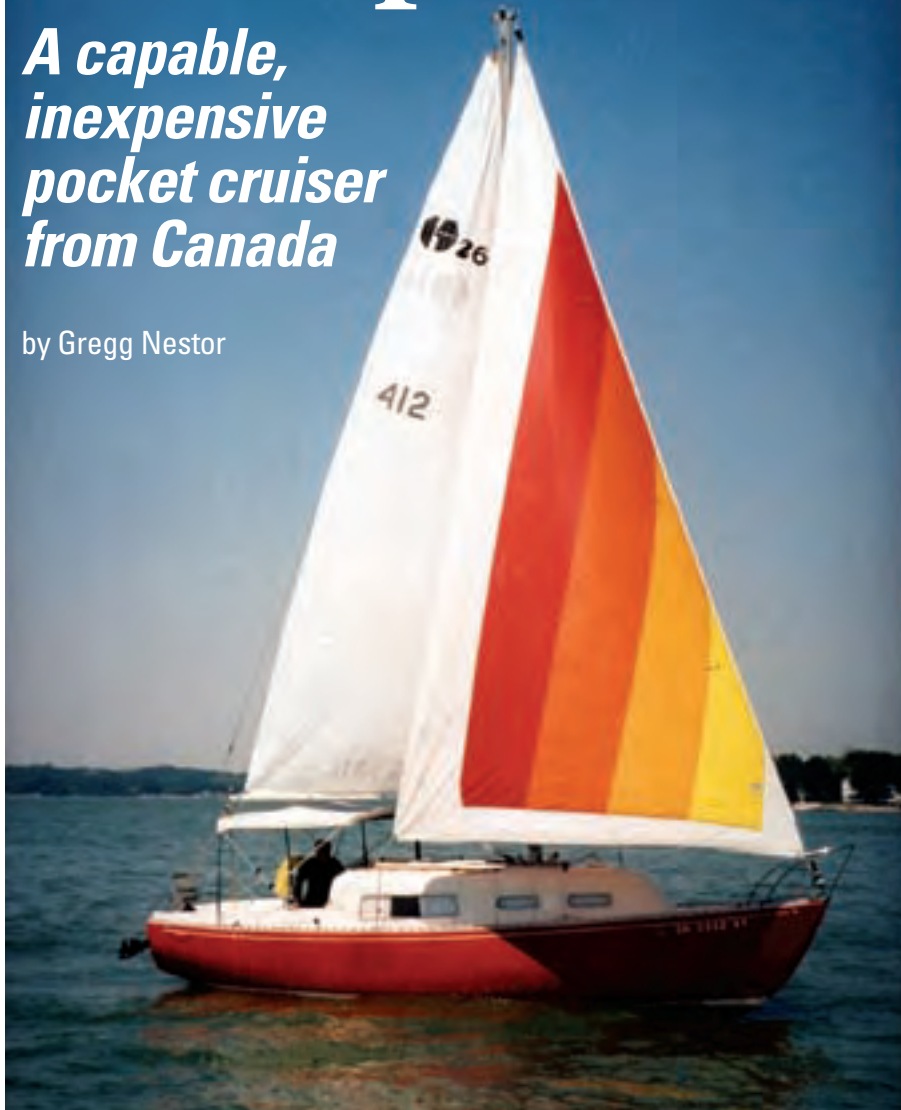
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# Grampian 26

*A capable,  
inexpensive  
pocket cruiser  
from Canada*

by Gregg Nestor



Grampian 26 #412, *Fire Flies*, owned by Edwin “Chip” Hessler of Sandusky, Ohio, ghosts along in light air.

## In-house designs

In 1967, Alex McGruer II became Grampian’s first in-house designer. Having grown up within the confines of McGruer and Company (the family’s boatbuilding business that was established in 1911), Alex was an experienced yacht designer. Upon joining Grampian, his orders were to design simple, comfortable boats that sailed well. More specifically, his first assignment was to develop a seaworthy boat large enough for a family of four, with 6-foot headroom, yet small enough to be trailerable. This mandate resulted in the popular Grampian 26.

Grampian’s line of cruising sailboats soon ranged from 23 to 46 feet and they built a 17-foot daysailer as well. Since much of Grampian’s production was destined for the U.S. market, they also opened a plant in North Carolina.

The company grew and things went well until 1977, when the weak Canadian dollar, coupled with competition from U.S. builders, drove the company out of business. Price Waterhouse, acting as receiver, liquidated the company’s assets before it declared bankruptcy. Tanzer Industries took over the North Carolina facility; the Oakville assets were sold to several buyers. By the fall of 1977, Grampian Marine was no more.

In the early 1960s, Jim Bisiker, in collaboration with Dirk Kneulman and John Burn, formed Canada’s first production sailboat company — Grampian Marine Limited. The name came from the Grampian Mountains near Aberdeen, Scotland, where Jim’s grandmother lived. At their new facility in Oakville, Ontario, they began making fiberglass sailing dinghies and small motorboats. After learning the techniques of fiberglass fabrication from The Anchorage, the Rhode Island builder of Dyer dinghies and larger craft, they began building Dyer boats under license. And for a brief period

of time Grampian imported and sold Shearwater catamarans that were manufactured by Fairey Marine in Hamble, England.

As time went on and the company’s expertise and reputation grew, Grampian Marine began manufacturing boats for a host of companies, including Triangle Marine, US Yachts, Fairey Marine, and O’Day. Grampian also built two traditional full-keel yachts, a 31-footer designed by Peter van Dye and a 37-footer by Sparkman & Stephens. It wasn’t until the late 1960s, however, that Grampian Marine began building its own designs.

## Design

The Grampian 26 has nice lines with its spoon bow, delicate sheer, and flat counter stern. Unfortunately, its ample freeboard, especially the high sides and boxiness of its cabin trunk, can overshadow its more delicate features. The somewhat ungainly cabin structure, however, is exactly what made this boat so popular. With 6-foot standing headroom and a sense of spaciousness below, the Grampian 26 became the company’s best seller. Its popularity was nearly instantaneous, and 200 boats were ordered the first year. During its 8-year production run, which



The mast is stepped on a shoe. By tightening and loosening the forestay and backstay, the mast's rake can be adjusted slightly forward or aft to correct weather or lee helm.



The high cabin sides of the Grampian 26 create 6-foot headroom inside, but also give the boat a somewhat boxy look, distracting the eye from the pleasant sheer.

began in 1969, nearly 1,000 hulls came off the line.

Although most Grampian 26s have deep fin keels, some were built with a keel/centerboard combination. These shallow-draft centerboard boats are trailerable. Both keel configurations were fitted with spade rudders and tiller steering. The Grampian 26's displacement/LWL ratio of 243 is moderate and suggests a seakindly coastal cruiser. Its ballast/displacement ratio of 47 percent makes for a fairly stiff boat. On the performance side, PHRF rates the fixed keel version at 213 and the centerboarder at 222. Both numbers suggest respectable performance for a family cruiser. For comparison, a similar vintage Columbia 26 rates 228 seconds per mile and a Pearson 26 rates 210 to 222, depending on the fleet.

### Construction

Like many of the boats built during the early years of fiberglass production, the Grampian 26 was heavily laminated. Its hand-laid hull is thick and solid and its deck is cored with balsa.

A fiberglass pan bonded to the inside of the hull functions as a foundation for interior features, such as berth flats. The pan does not extend over the entire hull. Instead, it terminates at hip height. Those remaining portions of the hull, from hip height to deck level, are covered with a foam-backed fabric. Overhead, a second fiberglass liner covers the inside of the cabin trunk down to deck level. This combination of fabric and liners conceals all the boat's unfinished interior fiberglass surfaces.

The hull-to-deck joint is an inward-facing flange. It is bonded with an

adhesive and mechanically fastened every 6 inches with stainless-steel bolts. The bolts also secure slotted anodized aluminum toerails along the full length of the boat.

In both configurations, the keels are made of cast iron. They are fastened externally by means of 1-inch iron bolts, although stainless steel would have been a better choice. The fin keel draws 4 feet 3 inches and the centerboard model has a 3-foot fixed draft (with the board down it's 6 feet 6 inches). Both the centerboard and rudder are made of solid fiberglass. The rudder stock and the metal skeleton inside the rudder's fiberglass body are constructed of stainless steel.

The joinerwork is acceptable and consists mainly of plywood veneered with a plastic laminate and trimmed



The cockpit, at left, is 7 feet 10 inches long and, with the tiller out of the way, there's room for a dance. The icebox, above, is accessible from the cockpit, which means you don't have to go below to grab a cold one. The starboard seat locker, at right, houses the gas tank and has plenty of room left over for lines, fenders, and other gear.







The hanging locker, at left, is opposite the head. The V-berth, above, has a removable insert. The compact galley, at right, doesn't have a lot of room for meal preparation. Note the single-burner butane camp stove underneath the countertop.



with solid teak. Most of the panels are faced with a wood-grain patterned laminate. The one exception is the head, which is white laminate. The cabin sole is painted plywood.

## Deck features

While the Grampian 26's foredeck is reasonably spacious, its 7-inch wide sidedecks are extremely narrow. This encourages sailors to take the cabintop route when going forward. Fortunately, the combination of the teak handrails flanking the cabintop and a good quality non-skid make this adventure somewhat less daunting. On the bow, a stainless-steel pulpit and single lifelines add to the feeling of security.

Of the three fixed portlights on each side of the cabin trunk, the two forward ones are quite small while the aft one is quite large. On the cabintop, in addition to the teak handrails, there's an opaque fiberglass forward hatch, a Dorade vent over the head, and the companionway's sliding hatch. There is no sea hood.

After the Grampian 26's high-sided cabin, the boat's other notable exterior feature is the cockpit. It's a generous 7 feet 10 inches long with reasonably high coamings and comfortable seats. Tiller steering makes it seem even more spacious, and a removable cutout in the transom reveals a mount for an outboard motor.

Storage is provided by port and starboard seat lockers, plus a cockpit-accessible icebox. The starboard locker



## Grampian 26

**Designer:** Alex Mcgruer  
**LOA:** 6 feet 0 inches  
**LWL:** 21 feet 9 inches  
**Beam:** 8 feet 4 inches  
**Draft (keel):** 4 feet 3 inches  
**Draft (cb):** 3 feet 0 inches/6 feet 6 inches  
**Displacement:** 5,600 pounds  
**Ballast:** 2,600 pounds  
**Sail area:** 325 square feet  
**Displ./LWL ratio:** 243  
**Sail area/displ. ratio:** 16.5  
**Bridge clearance:** 36 feet

is shallow. In addition to housing the gas tank for the outboard motor, it's best suited for stowing docklines and emergency gear. The cavernous port locker is home to the manual bilge pump, among other things. The icebox is deep and has a sliding shelf for easy access. It is marginally insulated, however, and drains to the bilge. To facilitate good drainage, the cockpit sole slopes noticeably aft, directing water to a pair of 1½-inch through-transom drains. There is no bridge deck and the companionway sill is quite low.

## Belowdecks

By today's standards, the interior of the Grampian 26 may seem Spartan, but in 1967 its 6-foot headroom, berths for four, head, and galley were extremely appealing and well received by the buying public. The layout is straightforward and consists of a V-berth, followed aft by a head and a convertible dinette to port, and a hanging locker, galley, and quarter berth to starboard.

The V-berth is large enough for average-sized adults. Full-length shelves are installed above. Several stowage bins, plus the potable water tank, are located beneath the V-berth. There is no deck fill for the tank. If the boat is fitted with the optional marine toilet, this area will also house the holding tank.

Aft and to port is the enclosed head with a hanging locker across the way to starboard. The standard head facilities

consist of a portable toilet and stowage outboard. The doors of the head and hanging locker swing to close off the passageway and provide fore-and-aft privacy. Four small portlights illuminate this area. The forward hatch and Dorade vent add ventilation.

The portside dinette seats four adults and converts into a narrow double berth. In addition to a bookshelf outboard, stowage compartments are located beneath the seats. A convenient cutlery drawer is fitted to the underside of the table. The tabletop is covered with a no-nonsense plastic laminate for easy maintenance.

Amidships and to starboard is the galley, which has a single deep stainless-steel sink with hand pump, a recessed shelf designed to accommodate a single-burner cooktop, and a good-sized counter area. A perimeter shelf and cabinetry beneath provide stowage for galley gear and provisions. The remaining two large portlights and the companionway hatch provide light and air circulation to the galley and dinette.

## “ Because the overwhelming majority of the Grampian 26s came with outboard engines, the area behind the companionway steps and dinette lacks mechanical systems and is cavernous. ”

Continuing aft, behind the galley is a large quarter berth, measuring 6 feet 4 inches by 30 inches. Several stowage bins, the battery box, and a dedicated fire extinguisher compartment are beneath this berth.

Because the overwhelming majority of the Grampian 26s came with outboard engines, the area behind the companionway steps and dinette lacks mechanical systems and is cavernous as a result. One gains access to this space through the port cockpit locker or by removing the companionway ladder.

### The rig

The Grampian 26 is a masthead sloop with a sail area of 325 square feet. Its sail area/displacement ratio is 16.5, in

the range of a conventional cruising sailboat. The boat's aluminum mast is stepped on deck in a shoe in which it can be adjusted to correct for weather or lee helm. A support truss is employed in lieu of a compression post. This athwartship structural member is positioned just forward of the forward bulkhead and is supported by the cabin sides. The mast has a bridge clearance of 36 feet. The single-spreader rig is supported by a pair of cap shrouds, fore and aft lowers, a forestay, and a split backstay. The chainplates are bolted to knees glassed to the hull.

On Chip Hessler's *Fire Flies*, which served as our test boat, double-braided polyester halyards run through

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The dinette table, above, can be lowered to form a single berth, at left. On outboard motor models, the absence of an engine underneath the cockpit means extra stowage space, at right.



external sheaves and belay to cleats on the mast. A pair of single-speed halyard winches are mounted on the mast. The boat has no headsail sheet tracks. Sheets are led through snatch blocks

positioned on the slotted toerail and then aft to primary winches mounted forward on the cockpit coamings. Originally equipped with British-made Gibb single-speed winches, *Fire Flies* had her primaries upgraded to Bariert self-tailers.

The main is sheeted end-boom to the transom in a triangular configuration often referred to as a Crosby rig. The fiddle block is mounted to the starboard

corner and can be awkward to use on all points of sail. As was common in its era, the Grampian 26 came with roller reefing. Other sail controls include a topping lift and downhaul.

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Because the companionway sill is somewhat low, the lower hatchboard is best left in place during bad weather.

### Under way

Contrary to Grampian's marketing claims, the Grampian 26 is not a performance boat. It is a cruising sailboat that is stiff and reasonably well balanced. The boat is not particularly close-winded nor is it a light-air performer, and its off-the-wind performance is considered only average. While the boat can carry a full set of sails in a near blow, it's best and more comfortable to reef earlier, say between 15 and 20 knots.

Most of the 1,000 or so Grampian 26s were fitted with outboard motors. The standard Chrysler outboard in the 20- to 25-hp range was heavy for this boat. A 9.9-hp is a better fit. For an additional \$2,000 or so, an inboard engine was available as an option and, during its 10-year production run, a variety of power plants were used. These included the gasoline-fueled Atomic 4 and Palmer and the single-cylinder Volvo and Yanmar diesels.

When it comes to seaworthiness, the Grampian 26 is quite capable of ocean sailing. At least one has crossed the Atlantic and several have cruised from the Great Lakes to the Caribbean and back.

### Things to check out

As is the case with most any boat that has celebrated at least 30 birthdays and possibly closer to 40, any issues with the Grampian 26 are well documented. Prior to making an offer, several potential problem areas should be noted and investigated by a competent surveyor:

- Osmotic blistering
- Gelcoat cracking and crazing
- Portlight leaks (rubber seal failure)
- Deck delamination
- Cracks in aluminum stemhead fitting
- Splitting of the rudder
- Rusty keel bolts and backing plates
- Loose keel that needs tightening
- Deck compression around mast base
- Aluminum electrical wiring

### Conclusion

The once very popular Grampian 26 is a strongly built and roomy cruiser. The boat is easy to handle in a variety of conditions and has proven itself on at least one ocean. Generally speaking, the boat has probably reached its terminal depreciation. Its age, how it has been maintained, and any upgrades that have been made over the years will be the

main factors influencing the price of any individual boat. On the used-boat market, the Grampian 26 represents a good buy. Expect to pay less than \$10,000 for an outboard model. The rare inboard boats run about \$1,500 more. <sup>▲</sup>

*Gregg Nestor, a contributing editor with Good Old Boat, developed a keen interest in sailing while growing up on the southern shore of Lake Erie. His third book, The Trailer Sailer Owner's Manual: Buy-Outfit-Trail-Maintain, will soon be released. When he's not writing about sailing, Gregg and his wife, Joyce, cruise aboard Raconteur, their Pearson 28-2.*

### Resources

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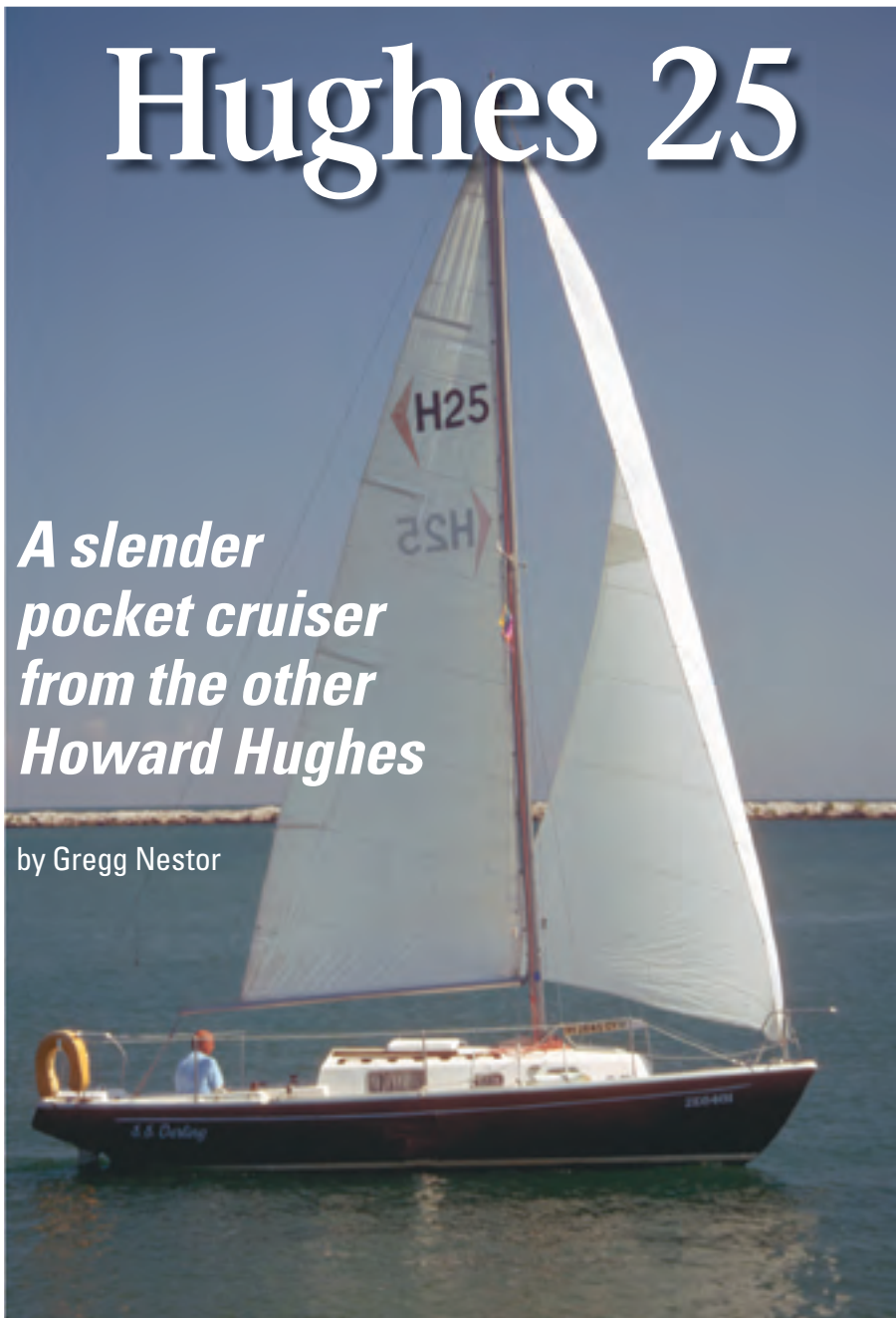
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# Hughes 25

*A slender  
pocket cruiser  
from the other  
Howard Hughes*

by Gregg Nestor



**H**UGHES BOAT WORKS LIMITED WAS the largest Canadian sailboat manufacturer for several years, building a total of approximately 3,500 sailboats. One of its earliest models was the Hughes 25, which was designed by Howard Hughes and went into production in 1968. Described in company literature as “Our Swinger! A fast, pretty, family boat ...”, the Hughes 25 is a versatile pocket racer/cruiser with sweet lines and surprising performance.

In 1963, brothers Howard and Peter Hughes of Willowdale, Ontario, formed a partnership to build dinghies ranging from 8 to 16 feet in length. Their venture was successful, and in 1965 they

relocated Hughes Boats to the Toronto suburb of Scarborough. There they began building larger sailboats. These included the Hughes 24 (using tooling purchased from Tanzer), the Hughes 27 (designed by Howard), and the Hughes 38 (a Sparkman & Stephens design). On Feb. 23, 1967, Hughes Boat Works Limited was formally incorporated and registered with the province of Ontario. In 1968, the company relocated to Huron Park (Centralia), Ontario, where larger manufacturing facilities, including a test tank, were located. Our review boat, the Hughes 25, along with the 22 and 29 (designed by Howard) and the Hughes 38 and 48

(designed by Sparkman & Stephens) all went into production in 1968.

In 1969, the company was bought by U.S. Steel and the name was changed to Northstar Yachts Limited. The brothers stayed on with the company until 1971. Between 1971 and 1975, Northstar introduced six Sparkman & Stephens designs ranging from 25 to 38 feet and a pair of boats (24 and 30 feet) designed by Bruce Farr. All of these models were racers, and one won a quarter-ton world championship. Despite the boats' pedigrees and racing prowess, however, on Dec. 10, 1975, Northstar Yachts Limited was formally listed as canceled/inactive by U.S. Steel.

Howard Hughes purchased Northstar Yachts in 1977 and renamed it Hughes Boatworks Inc. Deciding to focus on family cruisers rather than racing, he sold the Farr-designed tooling, modified several of the Sparkman & Stephens designs, and also began molding hulls for Tartan Yachts. Business was good.

Around 1979, Howard bought Columbia Yacht Corporation, renamed it Hughes-Columbia, and relocated its production facilities to Canada. Seven new models, called Hughes-Columbia, were soon introduced using designs by Alan Payne and Bill Tripp Sr. Production of the five Hughes models (the previously reworked Sparkman & Stephens designs) continued simultaneously.

Unfortunately, prosperity did not last. Hughes-Columbia went into receivership and the factory was closed in 1982. This was largely due to the debt incurred by the acquisition of Columbia Yachts and compounded by a deep recession and high interest rates. With interest rates around 18 percent, sailboat sales plummeted. Aura Yachts purchased the business but was unsuccessful in making a go of it.

Howard Hughes again entered the picture and bought the assets after the failure of Aura. He began building a custom 41-footer in an Orangeville, Ontario, facility. Fire destroyed the plant in 1991 and the insurance company turned out to be fraudulent, leaving Howard emptyhanded. At this point, most tooling for the boats had been moved outside of the plant, where it remains to this day.

The phoenix arose from the ashes no more.

## Design and construction

The Hughes 25 has a relatively straight sheer that harmonizes well with the low chin of the bow and the relatively long counter with reverse transom. The cabinroof line increases slightly in height as it runs aft. Matching-height portlights complete and complement the boat's traditional aesthetics.

The boat has a fin keel with a long, tapered leading edge and some deadwood aft fairing into the hull. The rudder is a balanced spade raked aft. In the late 1960s each of these appendage types was thought to increase speed but have since been dropped in favor of more vertical keels and rudders.

Beam is a lean 7 feet, 6 inches. Coupled with just 3 feet, 3 inches of draft, it makes for a tender hull form. The displacement/length ratio is a moderate 234, and the sail area/displacement ratio is a whopping 20.8.

The hull and deck are constructed of fiberglass. While the hull is a solid hand laminate, the one-piece deck molding is a fiberglass sandwich with a core of end-grain balsa. End-grain balsa is extremely light and highly resistant to crushing. It also affords good insulation against heat, cold, and sound. The downside is that if it gets wet, it turns into mush and delamination of the skins occurs.

The hull-to-deck joint is a box joint, where the deck fits over the hull much like the lid on a shoebox. The hull and deck are bonded with adhesive and mechanically fastened with pop rivets on 2-inch centers. On the outside, the joint is covered with an aluminum rubrail.

The interior structure is a one-piece fiberglass pan that incorporates all berths, the countertops, and the cabin sole. Wooden ribs that have been fiberglassed to the hull along with the bonded-in pan and fiberglass headliner complete the structural package.

All deck fittings are through-bolted and most are set with aluminum backing plates. The fin keel has 1,600 pounds of lead ballast mounted externally with ½-inch stainless-steel bolts. The spade rudder is solid fiberglass molded around a stainless-steel rudder post. Tiller steering is standard.

## On deck

The narrow foredeck is relatively free of clutter except for a central cleat and a pair of large closed chocks. Its



On facing page, Pat McCann and S.S. Darling, a 1973 Hughes 25, hull #48, ghost along, showing a traditional and pleasing profile. This page: *Darling's* foredeck, top left; lazarette with engine well and storage for the fuel tank, center left; and a 7-foot-long cockpit with good back support and leg bracing capabilities, bottom left. The images below show the tabernacle with seven fore-and-aft positions, at top; sheet winch without handle installed, center; and the builder's nameplate, bottom.





## Boat review



surface and that of the 9-inch-wide sidedecks is molded-in non-skid. The stainless-steel bow pulpit is connected via single lifelines and 23-inch stanchions to the stern pulpit. Even though there are 4 feet of teak handrail on the cabintop and a molded-in toerail, the combination of outboard shrouds and narrow sidedecks makes fore and aft movement challenging.

On top of the cabin, forward of the mast, is an opening hatch that leads to the V-berth below. On the cabin sides are six fixed portlights. Four smaller

propeller aft of the rudder and makes for easy maneuverability.

Stern docking hardware includes a pair of 8-inch cleats plus a pair of closed chocks.

### Belowdecks

The Hughes 25 was offered in two interior configurations, each with berths for five. Both arrangements incorporate a V-berth separated from the main cabin by a bulkhead. Interior Plan A features opposing settee berths in the main cabin, followed by an aft galley to

“The Hughes 25 was offered in two interior configurations, each with berths for five.”



ones are forward and two larger ones are aft. There is no sea hood protecting the sliding hatch at the companionway. Making one would be a good upgrade.

The cockpit is a generous 7 feet long and features 10-inch coamings that provide good back support. The boat's narrow beam translates into a narrow footwell that affords good bracing when heeled. There's a bridge deck and a pair of scuppers connected to bronze seacocks to remove water from a pooped cockpit.

The relatively long counter houses a lazarette, which incorporates an engine well and stowage for a 6-gallon fuel tank. This arrangement places the

port and a quarter berth to starboard. Our review boat was configured with Plan B, fitted with two quarter berths and a single starboard settee berth.

The port settee berth was replaced with the galley and a seat. All berths are a minimum of 6 feet long.

In both layouts, the galley consists of a single stainless-steel sink with manual pump; a 4-cubic-foot front-loading icebox; a teak rack for glasses, plates, and silverware; and a space for a cooktop. The potable water tank holds approximately 3 gallons and the sink drain is connected to a bronze seacock. The table, a fold-up affair, is an integral part of the companionway steps.



eneath the V-berth are three stowage lockers and the portable toilet, which is plumbed to a deck pump-out fixture. Even though the V-berth and head are forward of a full bulkhead, there were no factory provisions for a privacy door or curtain.

There's plenty of stowage beneath the settee berths, plus along the 10-plus feet of fiddled shelving situated outboard and above both sides of the main cabin.

The majority of the interior surfaces are off-white gelcoat. The bulkhead and table are marine plywood veneered in teak. The trim and accents are solid teak. The sole is carpeted. Headroom in the main cabin is 4 feet 10 inches.

### The rig

The Hughes 25 is a single-spreader masthead sloop with a 145-square-foot mainsail and a 155-square-foot fore-triangle, yielding a total sail area of 300 square feet.

The mast and boom are aluminum extrusions with internal sail tracks. The mast is stepped on deck. In an unusual but very helpful feature, the cast aluminum tabernacle features seven fore-and-aft mast positions so weather or lee helm can be corrected. The tabernacle also allows for fore or aft raising and lowering of the mast. The standing rigging is  $\frac{5}{32}$ -inch 1 x 19 stainless-steel wire and with single uppers, double lowers, and a single backstay. The boom is fitted with worm-drive roller reefing.

Sail controls consist of two 9-foot, 6-inch genoa tracks and cars situated on the port and starboard toerails. These lead the sheets to small sheet winches and their associated cleats. Mainsail sheeting is end-boom and is connected to a traveler aft of the tiller. All halyards are external, double-braided Dacron and cleated at the mast.

### Under way

The Hughes 25 is a very satisfactory first cruiser. Its large cockpit and roomy

**Facing page: the cabin table is integral to the companionway steps, left-hand column; the galley in S.S. Darling's Plan B configuration, center; her bunks sleep five 6-footers, right (two quarter berths are not visible). The toilet is beneath a V-berth cushion.**



## Hughes 25

**Designer:** Howard Hughes  
**LOA:** 25 feet 2 inches  
**LWL:** 19 feet 0 inches  
**Beam:** 7 feet 6 inches  
**Draft:** 3 feet 3 inches  
**Displacement:** 3,500 pounds  
**Sail area:** 300 square feet  
**Ballast:** 1,600 pounds  
**Headroom:** 4 feet 10 inches

interior make for a comfortable pocket cruiser. Its 3-foot 3-inch draft allows for gunkholing. Initially, the boat is tender and quickly heels, but as soon as it reaches 15 degrees or so it stiffens up nicely. This is typical of boats designed to the CCA (Cruising Club of America) Rule. These boats have shorter waterlines, but as soon as the boat heels, the sailing length increases, along with an increase in boat speed. The low wetted surface area and high-aspect-ratio sail plan also make for speed.

When the winds pick up above 15 knots or so, it is prudent to take a tuck in the main. Forget the roller reefing and install slab reefing.

The combination of a fin keel and spade rudder makes the boat responsive and able to point well, while the outboard shrouds take some of that gain back by limiting the sheeting angle.

At present, only four Hughes 25s are being actively raced, mostly in fleets around the Great Lakes' regions of Canada and the U.S. Their PHRF numbers vary only a little — between 225 and 231. That's quite a bit quicker than the very similar Cape Dory 25 at 261, and slower than the much more mod-

ern J/24 at 171. A Catalina 25 averages around 225. Given its age, the Hughes 25 acquits itself quite well.

With the engine in a well and the propeller aft of the rudder, maneuverability under power is good.


### Things to check out

The newest Hughes 25 is more than 30 years old, and age-related issues should be readily apparent. One of the most insidious problems is delamination of the balsa-cored deck. This is caused by water that has found its way into the core through a damaged outer fiberglass skin or from beneath poorly bedded hardware. Regardless of how it got inside, this is not good. Delaminated areas sound dull and hollow when struck by a plastic hammer or the handle of a screwdriver.

A small area of delamination can usually be fixed or, if allowed to dry out, left alone. However, extensive delamination must be addressed and can be costly. The cost for a major repair of this type is probably more than the value of the boat. If you don't want to do it yourself (since your hourly rate costs you nothing), it's better to keep looking for another boat.

Check for mast compression. Look for signs of cracking, bending, or movement in the supporting bulkhead beneath the mast. Investigate the hull-to-deck joint. This box joint can be easily damaged by a side impact with a dock or piling. Look for gelcoat cracks, a damaged aluminum rubrail, or a waviness to indicate that such an impact may have taken place.

### Summing up

The Hughes 25 is a responsive racer and coastal cruiser. If you race, it'll be competitive. If you cruise, it'll be reasonably comfortable and dry. If you're a novice, you'll find that the Hughes 25 is easy to handle and quite forgiving. The boat performs well in light air, but benefits from a reef when the winds pipe up. Its lines are appealing and the size of its cockpit is generous. You can pick one up for about \$2,500. 

## Resources

### Hughes discussion group

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# The Folkboat

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Sunden's home country was Sweden, which had declared neutrality in World War II. In the early 1940s the Swedes organized an international competition for a new common Scandinavian class of sailboats. The organizers were looking for a cheap, fast, seaworthy, one-design racing boat that could also

*by John Vigor*

be used for family cruising during weekends and holidays.

Nearly 60 designs were entered for the competition, but none was accepted outright, and Tord Sunden, then an amateur yacht designer, was chosen by the organizing committee to pull together the most promising aspects of the top four designs submitted.

The result was the nautical equivalent of the German Volkswagen, the

people's car. She was named the people's boat, the Folkboat. But little did the organizers of the competition imagine how successful she would be. Eighty orders poured in from all over Sweden before the final plans were completed.

Today, 60 or so years after the first Nordic Folkboat was launched, there are thousands of Folkboats afloat: wooden ones and fiberglass ones. The majority are in Europe, with Sweden leading the pack, followed by Denmark, Germany, Finland, and the



# *The equivalent of the German Volkswagen, the Swedish Folkboat was designed for the people*

United Kingdom. There are about 120 in San Francisco, where the San Francisco Bay Folkboat Association administers the fleet, and where the Folkboat's wonderful heavy-weather performance is much admired.

Besides the Nordic Folkboats, all of which comply with the class's one-design rules, there are thousands of near-Folkboats, close look-alikes such as the Contessa 26 (*featured in the September 1999 issue*), most of which attempt to increase her interior living space with more beam, a longer waterline, and a larger coachroof, while retaining her fabled seakeeping qualities and her classical good looks.

In 1966 Tord Sunden introduced a variant of the classic Nordic Folkboat that lacked the traditional lapstrake planking. It was carvel-planked and featured a shallower, self-bailing cockpit. She also was more luxurious below. She was known as the International Folkboat, but the Scandinavians regarded that description as misleading, and referred to her only as the "IF Boat." The term International Folkboat survived in the United States, however, and the International Folkboat Association of San Francisco Bay held sway over their racing and cruising activities there.

## **Basic design**

The original design concept had a long, overhanging stern, like a 30-Square-Meter's. But that was later chopped off, probably because a long overhang adds considerably to building costs. The result was a much more seaworthy transom stern. The transom, however, was given a handsome rake so it would better match the moderate overhang of the bow, and thus the after end of the full keel also was clipped away to line up with it. That, together with the generous cutaway up forward, greatly reduced the wetted area of the keel without affecting its efficiency. Early critics thought the raked rudder would make steering difficult under some

circumstances, but experience proved them wrong.

The first boats were, of course, built of wood. Their hulls were clinker-built, or of lapstrake construction, with each strake overlapping the upper edge of its neighbor below. This makes the boat strong and light. It also adds greatly to her looks by repeating and emphasizing the sweet lines of her sheer.

The first fiberglass Nordic Folkboats were legalized in 1977 and were exact reproductions of the wooden boat, including the overlapping strakes. They



raced on equal terms with wooden boats and were forced by the strict one-design rules to use wooden masts.

The International Folkboats were regarded as a separate class, although their overall measurements and design were basically the same. They, too, were

produced in fiberglass, but with smooth topsides and lighter aluminum masts.

Between 1967 and 1984, when production ceased, Marieholms Bruk, of Sweden, launched more than 3,400 International Folkboats, hitting an annual record high of 552 boats in 1975. After that, there was a steep decline in demand, although almost 1,000 were sold in the next nine years.

Production of fiberglass Nordic boats also continued apace, and a Danish boatbuilder, Folkebådcentralen A/S, of Kerteminde, has now built more than 900 Nordic Folkboats that are solid GRP replicas of the original wooden-hulled design, lapped strakes and all.

The Folkboat has a rounded underbody with fairly slack bilges, a combination that makes for slight initial tenderness but more than compensates for it with comfort at sea. After that initial tilt, she stiffens up considerably, so much so that she is able to race in winds strong enough to keep other classes in port. The topsides and the cabintop are low, offering little resistance to the wind and making no concessions to creature comfort below. The foredeck is uncluttered — there are only a hatch and a mooring cleat to stub your toes on — and convenient to work on.

The cockpit is a compromise between the needs of racers and cruisers — barely big enough for a racing crew, barely small enough for serious deepsea cruising. Some Folkboats have a deep cockpit that is more sheltered and more comfortable, but it drains into the bilge. Serious deepsea sailors will want the other version, a self-bailing cockpit that will not endanger the ship if it fills with water. The rudder hangs outboard of the transom, a simple, strong and easily accessible arrangement. The tiller sweeps across the after deck, but doesn't interfere much with the crew in the cockpit.

The engine is a matter of choice and depends on whether your boat is Nordic or International. Some boats have a



well in the cockpit for an outboard motor of between 5 hp and 8 hp. Others mount an outboard on the transom. Still others prefer an inboard auxiliary, usually a single-cylinder diesel. If you're planning an ocean crossing in a Folkboat, it would make a lot of sense to choose an outboard, and to keep it on the transom. If you find it interferes with your self-steering gear, you may have to house it in a well, in which case you can either leave it down, causing a little drag in the water, or remove it and store it below while you're on passage. The inboard engine makes more sense for weekenders or coastal cruisers who won't miss the valuable stowage space as much as the bluewater cruisers will.

### **Accommodations**

It doesn't take long to describe the Folkboat's accommodations, although they, too, can vary according to whether she's Nordic or IF, and from builder to builder. On the IF boats, there's usually teak everywhere, and vinyl headliners. The hull is lined with padded vinyl, too, in place of the wooden ceiling. The V-berth has two berths more than 6 feet long, and the main cabin has two settee berths which are even longer. Some boats have an enclosed head compartment, and others are supplied with a portable head. There's a rudimentary



galley, and there may even be a small chart table. There's usually a hanging locker somewhere, and a few lockers and shelves scattered around the place, though not nearly enough for a long voyage. Nowhere is there sufficient room to swing a cat, and nowhere is the headroom more than 4 feet 8 inches.

The interior is bright and airy, though, especially with the companionway sliding hatch open, and seems very welcoming and protected in contrast to the exposed conditions of the cockpit.

### **The rig**

The Nordic Folkboat is a Bermudian sloop with a wooden mast and a conspicuous fractional rig — the forestay joins the mast about two-thirds of the way up from the deck. This makes for a small working jib and a large mainsail. It is, perhaps, not as efficient as a rig with a larger jib, seeing that the jib does most of the work when going to windward, but it certainly makes for happier cockpit crews when the load on the jib sheets is small.

Folkboats not subject to the one-design racing rules usually have modern masthead rigs and aluminum spars. Many of the boats in the United States are rigged that way. If you're more interested in crossing oceans

*Frank Costello's 1972 International Folkboat, Espresso, sails in California waters near Ferndale. Frank writes, "I used to sail these boats 25 years ago on San Francisco Bay but never could afford one. Finally, my salary caught up with depreciation, and I purchased one."*







than in racing around the buoys, the aluminum masthead rig might be preferable because it makes provision for double lower shrouds in place of the single after lower shroud that is standard on wooden masts.

The mast is stepped on deck but appears to be well supported by a massive deck beam and seems not to compress the cabintop as so many others do. Presumably, after more than 50 years of racing and ocean cruising, the builders of Folkboats have got it right.

Right from the beginning, Nordic Folkboat owners agreed to race without spinnakers, to make thing easier for family sailors and shorthanded crews. But those gung-ho Finns couldn't stand it. Even though they couldn't compete internationally with spinnakers, they raced with them among themselves.

"We simply think that sailing with a spinnaker is more fun, and that it makes sailing more colorful," explained a member of the Finnish Folkboat Association.

### Performance

Any class that is still going strong after more than 50 years obviously has something good going for it. The Folkboat has several excellent features, not the least of which is her performance. For a full-keel boat, she is surprisingly fast and close-winded. Her PHRF rating is 228 for boats with outboard engines and 234 for boats with inboards.

On top of that, she's easy to handle. A picture of IF Boat 377 (*Magnificent*

*Obsession*) published in *Latitude 38* magazine in June, 1998, shows her rail-down just outside San Francisco's Golden Gate in 25 knots and more. She has one reef in the mainsail and full working jib — and her tiller is being held dead fore-and-aft. No weather helm there.

The Folkboat is indeed revered for her ability to carry sail in strong winds, and no doubt her extra-heavy keel is largely responsible for this. The ballast ratio is an extraordinary 54 percent, which means the iron keel alone weighs more than all the rest of the boat. Little wonder that Folkboats were, and still



*The table in Espresso is interchangeable, serving as a cockpit and a dinette table.*

are, so popular in the blustery San Francisco Bay area.

Her performance as a seaboat is legendary, of course. It wasn't just a coincidence that two of the six boats in the first Singlehanded Transatlantic Race, in 1960, were Folkboats. Valentine Howells raced in the conventional Folkboat *Eira*, while Colonel H. G. ("Blondie") Hasler sailed a much-modified Folkboat, the famous *Jester*, which had a standard hull but a flush deck with a central control point and a Chinese lug rig.

The long keel gives the Folkboat good directional stability, and this, together with her zesty performance and her easy motion, makes her a sensible choice for a singlehanded voyager or a young couple — and we say a *young* couple only because young people are more likely to be forgiving about the Folkboat's biggest disadvantage, her lack of interior space.

### Known weaknesses

After nearly 60 years of production and real-life testing, there are no weaknesses left in the Folkboat that are not patently obvious, such as the cramped accommodation quarters. This is a very open, honest boat.

If you're contemplating buying one for a long voyage, you'll have to look for the wear and tear applicable to boats in general. Inspect the hull for the dreaded boat pox, if she's GRP, and be careful to locate any areas of rot if



she's wooden. Dance on those fiberglass decks and tap away with your screwdriver handle.

As always, even if you think you know it all, it's a wise move to get a second opinion. Let a qualified surveyor check her out. It's your life that's at stake.

### Owner's opinions

This is another boat people fall in love with so passionately that it's difficult to get an owner to say a word against a Folkboat. Her classic beauty alone is enough to still all criticism.

Yet the physical exploits of her devotees give us valuable insights into her abilities when the sole arbiter is the sea itself. Blondie Hasler's wooden *Jester* is both a good and a bad example of this. Good, because she crossed the Atlantic 14 times. Bad, because she was eventually lost at sea without trace. But she was very old and she had suffered more punishment than a dozen normal boats.

From the waterline down, *Jester* was a normal Folkboat, but the rest of her had been greatly modified by her owner, who was much given to invention and experimentation. She was a very early model, and in fact sailed from 1952 to 1959 with Hasler's "lapwing" rig before he threw that out and installed a junk rig for the 1960 Observer Singlehanded Transatlantic Race.

Hasler came in second in that race, a remarkable achievement. He was only eight days behind Francis Chichester's *Gipsy Moth III*, a much bigger and faster 39-foot sloop that crossed the finish line 40 days after the start. *Jester* was driven hard, and was reduced in

one gale to what Hasler described as "four reefs down."

The other Folkboat in that race, *Eira*, came in fourth out of six in 63 days. *Eira* was knocked on her beam ends, and Valentine Howells put into Bermuda to replace a chronometer he had lost and to repair some damage.

In 1963, Adrian Hayter circumnavigated the world alone, sailing halfway — from England to New Zealand — in *Sheila II*, a 32-footer. But he completed the New Zealand-to-England leg in a Folkboat called *Valkyr*. Mike Bale also sailed from England to New Zealand in a Folkboat called *Jellicle*, and had a crew for part of the way. In 1975, a 55-year-old Australian grandmother named Ann Gash sailed around the world single-handed in a Folkboat called *Ilimo*. She chose the east-to-west route via the Panama Canal, but had the boat shipped for part of the way, from Ghana to England.

More recently, a British Folkboat called *Storm Petrel* was completing an unusual circumnavigation in 1998 with

solo sailor Tony Curphey aboard. It was unusual because Tony's wife, Suzanne, was also making a singlehanded circumnavigation aboard her own boat, a 30-foot Seadog ketch called *Glory*. They had originally set out separately, not knowing each other, but they met in New Zealand and got married in the Solomon Islands.

Tony's Folkboat often beat Suzanne's Seadog into port on subsequent legs of their tandem voyage and regularly clocked up 130 miles a day in the trade winds. Their plan, once they had completed their solo circumnavigations, was to sell their boats, buy a bigger one, and carry on cruising — but together this time.

There are undoubtedly many other Folkboats that have sailed around the world and around Cape Horn, single-handed and crewed, whose names have not been recorded in the annals of smallboat sailing. There was a time, 50 years ago, when such voyages were rare, and records were kept of individual exploits. Now that they are more commonplace, nobody seems to be



*Frank writes, "The only complaint I ever heard was that they just didn't hold enough beer for a long voyage. I know that might sound a little funny, but once you have sailed on one, it becomes the measure of all other boats you may sail. I bet you won't find many that handle as well."*

keeping the tally, which is a great pity. Perhaps the Internet will one day find a place for the Roll of Honor of smallboat circumnavigations; if it does, the Folkboat will surely feature prominently.

## Conclusion


According to Marek Janiec, a member of the Swedish International Folkboat (IF) Association's technical committee, there are about 2,000 IFs in Sweden, and the market price there for a boat in excellent condition is about 60,000 Swedish kroner, or \$7,400 U.S. There are about 4,000 IF Boats scattered

throughout the globe, which makes it the biggest deep-keel racing class in the world.

"In Denmark, the price is 20 percent to 30 percent higher, and down in Europe, still 20 percent more."

So — would you score a financial coup by going to Sweden, buying a cheap Folkboat, and sailing her home? Probably not, although it's a very attractive plan, in any case. Second-hand International Folkboats sell on the West Coast of the United States for between \$10,000 and \$14,000, so the savings are not substantial in actual

dollar terms if you factor in travel and accommodation charges. A brand-new fiberglass Nordic Folkboat costs about \$40,000 in Denmark.

Wherever you buy one, a Folkboat represents good value for a boat capable of carrying one or two people around the world, albeit in cramped surroundings. Besides that, if you have any finer feelings at all, you'll have to agree that she's one of the most beautiful boats ever made to go to sea. Just looking at her riding to anchor in her own reflection in a tropical lagoon will make your heart leap with delight. 



## In Short

### Folkboat

**Designer:** Tord Sunden (1942)

**LOA:** 25 feet 1 inch

**LWL:** 19 feet 8 inches

**Beam:** 7 feet 2 inches

**Draft:** 3 feet 11 inches

**Displacement:** 4,322 pounds

**Sail area:** 258 square feet

**Ballast:** Cast iron, 2,315 pounds

**Spars:** Wood/aluminum

**Auxiliary:** Outboard or inboard, gasoline or diesel

**Designed as:** One-design family racer/cruiser

**Note:** These dimensions were supplied by Folkebadcentralen A/S, in Kerteminde, Denmark, builders of the fiberglass Nordic Folkboat.

## In Comparison

- ◇ **Safety-at-sea factor:** 8 (Rated out of 10, with 10 being the safest.)
- ◇ **Speed rating:** Fast for her size and displacement.
- ◇ **Ocean comfort level:** One or two adults in fairly cramped conditions. ("If you want to stand up," said the famous British designer Uffa Fox, "go on deck.")



*John Vigor is a freelance journalist based in Oak Harbor, Wash. He has raced, cruised, and written about boats for more than 30 years. He's the author of two new books, The Seaworthy Offshore Sailboat: A Guide to Essential Features, Gear and Handling (International Marine), and Twenty Small Sailboats to Take You Anywhere (Paradise Cay), which is the source of this and other reviews in this series. He also wrote Danger, Dolphins and Ginger Beer (Simon and Schuster), a sailing adventure novel for 8- to 12-year-olds; The Practical Mariner's Book of Knowledge (International Marine); and The Sailors' Assistant (International Marine).*

**Editor's note:** We're looking for photos of the **Pacific Seacraft 25** (scheduled for the March issue), the **Pearson Triton** (which will run in May), and the **Southern Cross 31** (which will be reviewed in the July issue). PS 25, Triton, and Southern Cross 31 owners, let us know if you've got photos of interiors, your boats at the dock, and especially of your boats under sail; old brochures and manuals; line drawings; owners' comments; or resources (organizations or vendors) which might be helpful to other sailors with your boats. We will return all materials and savor the comments. We look forward to hearing from you!



# Island Packet 27

*A beamy, shoal-draft cruiser ideal for Florida and the Bahamas*

by Henry Cordova

ISLAND PACKET YACHTS MAY VERY WELL be the only boatbuilder owned and managed by a graduate naval architect who builds and sells his own designs. Since its founding in 1979, IPY and its CEO, Robert K. Johnson, have been in the business of producing blue-water sailboats. (For more, refer to the July 2005 issue or read a full interview with Bob Johnson at [http://www.goodoldboat.com/reader\\_services/more\\_online/robert\\_johnson.php](http://www.goodoldboat.com/reader_services/more_online/robert_johnson.php).) Although the firm now specializes in high-end luxury yachts in the 40-foot range, it first made its name with a line of smaller cruisers, which quickly established its reputation for quality, sound construction, and seaworthiness. The first model was the IP 26, a development of the Bombay Yachts Express, a beamy, centerboard Cape Cod catboat-type hull with a barn door rudder and bowsprit. The 26's lines

were based on the Express, but Bob Johnson redesigned the interior, rig, and centerboard. The design concept can be traced even further back to the John Alden-designed catboats of the 1930s. The IP 26 Mk II was a further development of this idea, and one version of it was made with the trademark Island Packet Full Foil keel.

## History

The Island Packet 27 was introduced in 1984 as the replacement for the IP 26 Mk II; it was the fourth model sold by the company following the 26, 26 Mk II, and 31. Over the next eight years, 243 hulls were sold until the model was retired and replaced by the IP 29, making it one of the most long-lived boats in the Island Packet line. The IP 27 was, in effect, a "26 Mk III." The boat was marketed in two versions — a keel and keel/centerboard

**The Island Packet 27 is a handsome cutter. Its versatile rig and shoal draft make it an ideal cruiser for Florida and the Bahamas.**

shoal draft option — and it could be rigged as a sloop, although it is easily convertible to a cutter. Indeed, most IP 27s do carry two headsails. The boat is distinguished by twin backstays, a bowsprit with bobstay, and a long keel.

## Design

The IP 27 is a capable coastal cruiser. It has been successfully sailed offshore, although three dimensions recommend against that: it is not a big boat and its considerable beam, along with its shoal draft, increase the potential for inverse stability. Referring to the ISO (International Organization for Standards, more commonly followed in Europe than in the U.S.) standards specifying the conditions for which a given boat is suitable, Bob Johnson says the boat is "...right on the cusp between Category A [the most seaworthy] and B, and today only a few tweaks would be necessary to make it Category A." With a sail area/displacement ratio of 16.2, and a displacement/length ratio of 250, the boat can be characterized as a light-to-average cruiser on the dividing line between an offshore and coastal cruiser. Bob reports that one IP 27 fell off a wave on a passage to Bermuda and rolled over completely, tearing off the entire rig, but the boat recovered and survived, continuing to Bermuda under power.

A first look at the IP 27 reveals traditional lines and a salty overall appearance. The trademark IP look is evident throughout, from the café au lait hull color to the rounded-corner rectangular portlights along the length





of the cabin trunk. (The original IP 27s had plastic portlight frames until 1986, when they were replaced by aluminum. The following year they were again replaced, this time with stainless-steel frames.)

The boat is beamy with a roomy cockpit, high freeboard, and a traditional sheerline with a lot of spring. Below, the layout is practical and efficient with plenty of storage space and more than 6 feet of headroom.

It is not particularly fast or weathery, although its performance is more than adequate when one considers its other virtues. A relatively shallow draft in all its configurations makes it particularly convenient for gunkholing and bay work.

## Construction

As in most modern fiberglass boats, the deck-cabin-cockpit is molded as a single unit, utilizing a cored laminate construction of hand-laid fiberglass comprised of layers of mat and woven roving saturated with polyester resin on both sides of a core of glass microballoons and polyester resin. A fiberglass headliner is bonded to the underside of the deck. The bowsprit is molded integrally with both the hull and deck with alternating layers of plywood and fiberglass.

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**Island Packet Yachts favor rack-and-pinion steering, a geared system that doesn't have the feedback of the more familiar cable-quadrant-pedestal type. Its big advantage is that it is very strong with far fewer parts. The bowsprit, facing page, is integral to the fiberglass deck and makes anchoring chores easier, though one must work around the forestay and inner forestay furling drums.**

The hull is a solid fiberglass laminate made up of alternating layers of hand-laid triaxial roving saturated with polyester resin. Inside, a molded fiberglass structural pan is bonded to the hull; it forms the bed for all interior surfaces and furnishings, including settees, bunks, and the engine bed. The pan is reinforced with a plywood and fiberglass grid. Bulkheads and furniture assemblies are installed so they bond directly to both the pan and interior hull surfaces with multiple layers of woven roving and mat.

The hull and deck assemblies are joined by stainless-steel bolts with locking nuts through a flange molded into the hull and a urethane adhesive sealant.

It is always a good idea to get a used boat hauled out and professionally surveyed prior to purchase. One thing to look for are cracks and leaks along the keel; the IP 27's ballast is carried internally — iron slugs embedded in concrete. In the event of a leak, salt water could cause hidden corrosion and potential problems. Fortunately, the gentle slope of the leading edge of the keel should tend to rise up over an obstruction and disperse the shock.

Another thing to check for is severe pitting corrosion in the metal water tanks. Pull a sample of the water at the bottom of the tank and, in addition, look into the tank with a flashlight to see if the metal is clean and smooth and if the water is free of sludge

caused by metal corrosion.

There is a metal strap that bridges the gap between the keel and rudder to protect the propeller from fouling on lines and from damage due to floating objects. It provides no support to the rudder, so the boat could sail just fine without it. If the strap were damaged in a collision or grounding, it could conceivably bend the rudder post and affect steering, but this seems unlikely.

## Rigging

Standard on Island Packet boats are headsails set on roller furlers, though hanked-on sails are available. The genoa tack is at the end of the bowsprit, and the self-tending staysail's tack is located at the forward end of the deck. A full bow pulpit allows crew to work safely while handling headsails or ground tackle. The mainsail halyard winch is mounted on the mast; all other halyards, sheets, and furling lines lead to the cockpit. A traveler is mounted on a track that runs athwartships forward of the companionway hatch so the mainsheet does not interfere with cockpit activities or a Bimini top.

Five winches are provided for sail handling. The mast is stepped at the forward end of the coachroof with a compression post below to provide support. Inside the mast is an internal guide that secures wiring, and a messenger line is provided to run additional wires or cables. Access to wire connections in the mast is through a remov-





## Boat review



The galley, at left, is compact, but has the essentials: sink, stovetop, icebox, and lockers. The 10-foot 6-inch beam makes for a spacious saloon, at right, and more cabin sole than found on most 27-footers. The bulkhead-mounted table folds down and out to seat four. The enclosed head, facing page, has a sink and provision for a handheld shower; there's a small hanging locker outboard. Bernie and Jayna Hamel of Apollo Beach, Florida, are the third owners of *Shamrock*, an Island Packet 27 and our test boat, below on facing page.

able inspection plate. The mast has a design rake of one mast width. Reefing the mainsail is by the jiffy or slab system and can be accomplished by one person while standing at the mast.

### Accommodations

Stepping through the companionway reveals a spacious saloon with a compact galley to port and the electrical/navigational panels to starboard. The galley boasts an icebox; two-burner, gimballed LPG stove; and a sink with hot and cold water. Six-foot-plus berth/settees line each side of the cabin, and the starboard berth pulls out to convert to a double berth. There is 6-foot 1-inch headroom. A quarter berth on the starboard side extends under the cockpit seat; a portlight in the cockpit footwell provides welcome ventilation.

On the port side, aft of the galley, is a large storage locker accessible from the cockpit. Just forward of the starboard berth is a sturdy, bulkhead-mounted table that folds down and out to seat four.

When the head/shower door opens, it seals off the V-berth. In theory, the boat can sleep five (six, if two can squeeze into the cramped V-berth) but three or four is probably the practical limit, especially on a long cruise. The interior joinery is dark teak, well-built but a bit gloomy. A lighter color would improve visibility and a feeling of more space.

Adequate ventilation and illumination is provided by nine portlights and plenty of stowage is available in every stray corner.

The engine is behind the removable companionway ladder or can be



### Island Packet 27

**Designer:** Robert Johnson  
**LOA:** 30 feet 0 inches  
**LOD:** 26 feet 6 inches  
**LWL:** 24 feet 3 inches  
**Beam:** 10 feet 6 inches  
**Draft (keel):** 3 feet 8 inches  
**Draft (centerboard up):** 2 feet 8 inches  
**Draft (centerboard down):** 6 feet 0 inch  
**Displacement:** 8,000 pounds  
**Ballast:** 3,000 pounds  
**Sail area (cutter):** 405 square feet  
**Water:** 31 gallons  
**Fuel:** 19 gallons  
**Holding tank:** 12 gallons  
**Headroom:** 6 feet 1 inch  
**Mast above DWL:** 38 feet 6 inches  
**Engine:** 18-hp Yanmar diesel  
**Displ./LWL ratio:** 250  
**SA/Displ. ratio:** 16.2  
**PHRF:** 232

accessed from a hatch in the cockpit sole. The owners of our test boat report that changing the oil is not too difficult, but servicing the fuel filter requires a gentle touch and small hands.

### Performance

Our test boat for this review was *Shamrock*, a full-keel version owned by Bernie and Jayna Hamel of Apollo Beach, Florida. *Shamrock* did not appear to be anywhere near 22 years old. The Hamels are the third owners; the excellent condition of the boat reflects a quality product as well as loving maintenance from all of its owners. The Hamels have owned *Shamrock* for two years and soon after acquiring her they replaced both furling rollers, did some minor repairs on a spreader, put on fresh bottom paint, and repacked the stuffing box.

The original sails were repaired, and new cushions and other minor interior furnishings were added to spruce up the saloon. The Yanmar 2GM20 diesel engine, also original, required a new exhaust manifold, and several sea-cocks and through-hull fittings were replaced. They also installed davits. They are planning to replace the mainsheet winch with a self-tailing model (the jib winches are already self-tailing) and to add an anchor windlass.

Our test sail was conducted on Tampa Bay under ideal conditions — a light chop and 15-knot winds — which easily moved the boat to 5½ knots over the ground. Calculated hull speed is 6.6 knots, and Bernie said they've reached well over 6 under sail and power. They keep the boat's bottom clean by fre-



quently engaging the services of a diver. Bernie reports that the engine is more than adequate to make headway against stiff winds and heavy seas.

Performance was as advertised, with a gentle, yet solid, feel even when crossing the wakes of powerboats. As expected, *Shamrock* was not a demon to windward but pointed adequately and sailed comfortably with the wind on the quarter and the beam. Bernie remarked that downwind sailing would be improved with a vang, which they plan to add.

The opinion of the Hamels is that the boat is best crewed by two, although it could be singlehanded by a confident and nimble seaman. Coming about was accomplished without undue problems, but they did confess to being caught in irons a few times until they understood the boat's idiosyncrasies. They also mentioned that the genoa can foul in the narrow slot between the forestay and inner forestay, so a second crewman is certainly an advantage. We conducted several tacks without incident.

These boats are not often raced; in fact, there's just one boat listed by the United States Sailing Association, and its PHRF handicap is 232 seconds per mile. That's about the same as an inboard Ericson 27 at 238 but slower

than an inboard O'Day 27 at 204.

The rack-and-pinion steering, standard on all Island Packets, was a delight, although I must confess a bit of clumsiness with it, as I am more familiar with a tiller and the more common pedestal-cable steering. I was impressed with the ease with which the boat steered, almost as if it had a power assist; in fact, to my taste it was too easy! My hosts pointed out that there is a mechanical adjustment allowing the resistance of the wheel to be modified to suit the helmsman's preference. On a beam reach the boat steering was perfectly neutral, with no trace of lee or weather helm. I removed my hands from the wheel for more than a minute and the boat tracked in a straight line, perfectly balanced. I did notice, as one would expect, that helm response was a bit sluggish at slow speeds, no doubt due to the long keel. Because of the neutral helm, there is a tendency for the helmsman to oversteer after tacking, but this can be anticipated with experience. The aft end of the steering wheel shaft is prepared for installation of an autopilot.

Response under power at slow speeds was a bit awkward, with a noticeable lag between applying rudder and a change in direction. There is also a pronounced torque bias to the prop, causing the stern to swing to starboard when going forward and to port in reverse. An afternoon of practice in a calm marina on a windless day should allow the helmsman to learn the boat's

quirks and compensate for them. This would be particularly important when backing down, because the IP 27 is a bit clumsy in reverse.

## Conclusion

Island Packet owners enjoy solid support from the manufacturer. The factory is happy to provide advice to owners, even owners of secondhand boats. A complete factory website and an owner-operated user's group with its own website gives IP sailors access to authoritative technical advice and connections to other IP sailors. Many social functions are organized and communication between all members of the IP family is encouraged.

Due to the IP 27's long production run, there are quite a few still on the water. Figures quoted in Island Packet's website claim typical recent prices for used boats between 78 and 91 percent of their original purchase price. In 1984, the factory base price was \$41,950; in 1992, \$65,950. Of course, prices for used boats vary enormously depending on the boat's condition, history, age, and the usual market parameters. We found several for sale on the Internet, including a 1986 for \$41,000, and a 1990 for \$46,000. ⚓

*Henry Cordova is a geographer/cartographer who has been a sailor of the military persuasion (U.S. Navy Reserve on the USS Dewey) and of the recreational variety (a San Francisco Pelican and a MacGregor 22).*



## Resources

<<http://www.ipy.com>>

<<http://www.iphomeport.com>>



# Lancer 25

*A trailerable pocket cruiser with standing headroom*

by Gregg Nestor

*Bump-A-Noggin, owned by Rodney and Kathleen Scott, steps out, showing off the Lancer 25's pert lines.*

**R**ichard Valdes founded Columbia Yachts in 1958. Under his presidency, the company became the world's largest manufacturer of fiberglass sailboats with sales approaching \$300 million by the early 1970s. Following his departure from Columbia in 1974, he established the Lancer Yacht Corporation in Irvine, California. The company soon had manufacturing facilities on both coasts, in Fountain Valley, California, and Largo, Florida.

Lancer's 14-model product line ranged from 25 to 65 feet and included motorsailers as well as sailboats. The motorsailers were designed by Herb David and were unique in that they were available with single or twin diesel engines. They performed tolerably well under sail but really stood out under power — their high-horsepower engines produced speeds in excess of 15 knots.

While the design team from C&C Yachts was contracted to draw the

lines for the bulk of Lancer's sailboats, W. Shad Turner — a young naval architect noted for his custom and production racing designs, including six Santana models for the W.D. Schock Corporation — was commissioned to design the company's trailerable sailboats, including the Lancer 25.

In 1983, Lancer Yacht Corporation was purchased by a company called Bally. Production of sailboats and motorsailers continued for three more years until 1986 when the company ceased operations.

## Design

Shad Turner drew the Lancer 25 with a fine entry, low freeboard, a fairly flat sheer, and a pinched stern favored by the International Offshore Rule (IOR) that was popular at the time. Under the water, he gave it a long, shallow-draft fixed keel with a spade rudder.

The design feature that most distinguishes this 25-foot trailersailer is standing headroom. By recessing the

inside of the keel and locating the ballast along its bottom, Shad created a keel sump 6 feet long and 16 inches deep. What would ordinarily be 54 inches of sitting headroom without the sump became 70 inches of standing headroom.

Introduced in 1975, the Lancer 25 remained in production until 1984. In that time, at least three variations or upgrades were made, most involving equipment or cabin layout.

## Construction

The Lancer 25 is stoutly built. Its hull is constructed of hand-laid solid fiberglass and the cabintop, deck, cockpit, and transom are fiberglass reinforced with a plywood core. The hull-to-deck joint appears to be an inward flange and lid joint that has been fastened together with screws on 6-inch centers, glassed over on the inside, capped with a slotted toerail, and covered with a vinyl rubrail. All the deck hardware is through-bolted and mounted with proper backing plates.





The wide companionway makes for easy egress, but you have to get by the mainsheet tackle first, at left. The cockpit coamings are sufficiently high to provide decent back support. The gas tank for the outboard motor is in the lazarette aft of the tiller, at right.

Drawing only 2 feet 4 inches, the Lancer 25's keel is often described as a shoal-draft fin. However, with a root chord of nearly 14 feet and a tip chord of 8 feet, a more appropriate description would be a cut-away full keel or a long cruising fin. It is molded as an integral part of the hull and has 1,200 pounds of lead ballast bonded to its lowest point.

Interior construction consists of a fiberglass pan that's bonded to the hull, a series of padded fabric hull panels, and a foam-backed vinyl headliner. These components successfully cover any raw fiberglass and make for easy access to deck-hardware fasteners, wiring, and other fittings. They also impart a degree of insulation and noise suppression. The single bulkhead is teak-veneered plywood and all doors and miscellaneous trim pieces are solid teak.

### Deck features

The Lancer 25's most notable above-the-water feature is the long, low, cambered coachroof that slopes steeply toward the bow and disappears into the foredeck. A pair of long, low, tapered portlights on each side of the cabin emphasize this streamlining effect. Combined with the boat's sharp entry, these design elements give an impression of speed even when the boat's at rest. Unfortunately, this styling results in a loss of interior volume and foredeck area.

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Making up for the absence of genoa tracks, slotted toerails provide multiple options for leading the jibsheets, at right. The unusual color scheme shows off the vee transom.

The deck and coachroof are relatively obstruction-free. Forward, there's a pair of chocks, a deck pipe, a single mooring cleat, and a cowl vent. There is no anchor locker. On the coachroof there's a translucent fiberglass forward hatch, a proper sea hood over the companionway sliding hatch, and a molded-in coaming that allows for the easy installation of a dodger or the optional "special windshield." All horizontal surfaces are finished with a fairly aggressive non-skid pattern. Stainless-steel bow and stern pulpits, plus a single lifeline on 24-inch stanchions, provide some security, but there are no

handrails or handholds. Going forward safely in anything but the most benign seas would be very difficult.

The cockpit is reasonably sized and features 66-inch-long seats with seat-backs averaging 13 inches high. The foot well is narrow enough to offer good bracing and the high coamings provide comfortable back support. The lazarette affords stowage for the outboard motor's 6-gallon fuel tank. Originally, it gave access to the outboard motor, which was transom-mounted on the boat's centerline. On our review boat, *Bump-A-Noggin*, owned by Rodney and Kathleen Scott, the original cutout





## Review boat



*Bump-A-Noggin* has a bright interior thanks to reupholstered settee cushions. The compression post for the mast is dead center, at left. Forward, the head compartment has vanities port and starboard, with the sink in the starboard one, and a portable toilet is normally between them, at right.

transom had been glassed over and the outboard motor mounted to port on an adjustable bracket.

To starboard is a transom-mounted folding swim ladder. A pair of 1¾-inch drains keeps the cockpit dry. However, there's no bridge deck and, together with the generously large companionway opening, these drains may not be sufficient to keep water out of the cabin in rough weather. While under sail in large seas, it would be prudent to keep at least the lower hatchboard in place.

### Belowdecks

The Lancer 25 cabin is divided into two compartments, with the forward one being further divided into roughly two areas. In the forepeak, there's a space to store the anchor rode plus a large sail locker.

Immediately aft of the forepeak is the head compartment. It has port and starboard vanities with space between them for a portable toilet or an optional marine head. A stainless-steel sink with manual cold water is fitted in the starboard vanity.

A V-berth conversion also was available as an option, giving this 25-foot trailerable boat a six-berth layout! The forward hatch and cowl vent provide light and ventilation. Unfortunately, the cowl vent lacks a Dorade box to help keep water out and has the potential to make things awfully wet below. When conditions warrant, it should be plugged. The teak-faced bulkhead and solid teak doors give privacy and separate this forward compartment from the main cabin.

The saloon is traditional with port and starboard opposing settees. As berths, the 6-foot 4-inch settees are

long enough but are a bit too narrow. A "super bunk" option was available that converts the settees into a full-width berth.

At the boat's widest beam, and separating the settees from their respective quarter berths, are port and starboard galley units. Originally, the port unit featured a two-burner alcohol cooktop, stowage, and counter space, while a stainless-steel sink with manual cold water and a top-loading icebox were housed in the starboard unit. *Bump-A-Noggin's* alcohol stove has been replaced with a microwave and the under-counter stowage now houses a 110-volt refrigerator. Surprisingly, Lancer did not provide a table as standard equipment; a teak folding table that mounts to the compression post was available as an option.

Four fixed tinted portlights illuminate the saloon while the companionway hatch contributes fresh air. The sole is low-maintenance fiberglass and, thanks to the hollow keel sump, headroom is 5 feet 10 inches. There are no handholds at counter level, shoulder level, or overhead.

Aft and beneath each of the cockpit seats is a quarter berth. Measuring 6 feet 4 inches long and 30 inches wide, these are roomier than the saloon settees. Above the foot of each quarter berth is a clamshell vent opening to the cockpit. Battery stowage is beneath the starboard quarter berth.

Between the quarter berths and aft of the companionway ladder is a large open stowage area perfect for stowing bulky items such as fenders, boathooks,



### Lancer 25

**Designer:** Shad Turner  
**LOA:** 24 feet 8 inches  
**LWL:** 20 feet 1 inch  
**Beam:** 8 feet 0 inches  
**Draft:** 2 feet 4 inches  
**Displacement:** 3,400 pounds  
**Ballast:** 1,200 pounds  
**Sail area:** 248 square feet  
**Disp./LWL ratio:** 187  
**Sail area/Disp. ratio:** 17.6  
**Ballast/Disp. ratio:** 0.35  
**Headroom:** 5 feet 10 inches  
**Mast height:** 32 feet (above DWL)  
**Water:** 15 gallons



The quarter berths under the cockpit seats, above, are a little wider than the settees in the saloon. By recessing the cabin sole into the keel, Lancer gave this low-profile boat nearly 6 feet of standing headroom, at right. Behind the ladder is a large space for stowing bulky items. The bottom step hinges up to reveal the bilge pump.

and life jackets. Beneath this area is a molded-in 15-gallon water tank, with its fill pipe inside the boat. The bottom companionway step is hinged and allows access to the electric bilge pump.

In addition to the lazarette, forepeak, and galley, the Lancer 25 has eight separate stowage lockers. The two bins beneath the quarter berths are molded into the liner pan and could be used as auxiliary ice chests.

### The rig

True to its vintage, this masthead sloop was rigged for a favorable rating under the IOR, which, among other things, encouraged large headsails and small mainsails. Standing rigging consists of a forestay, a single pair of spreaders, cap and lower shrouds, and a single backstay. The chainplates are outboard and glassed to the hull. They also appear to be mechanically fastened to the hull with the screws used to secure the hull-to-deck joint. The mast is stepped on deck and supported below by a compression post.

The halyards are wire-to-rope and run through external sheaves. A single Lewmar #7 winch is mounted on the mast. Two more #7s are mounted on the cockpit coamings. There are no headsail tracks but an almost unlimited number of headsail sheeting angles is possible by using the slotted toerail and a snatch block. The mainsail is sheeted nearly mid-boom and connected to a traveler mounted on the cockpit sole.

The standard sails are a 5-ounce Dacron main and a lapper jib. These combine for a sail area of 248 square feet. A 150 percent genoa and a spinnaker with gear were optional. Tiller steering was standard.

### Under way

To fully understand how and why the Lancer 25 sails the way it does, an understanding of the IOR is helpful. Under the rule, bottoms tended to be flatter, especially forward. This resulted in a sharp, deep entry and had a negative effect on steering. Shapes tended to be finer or pinched in the bow and stern, which made boats difficult to steer downwind, especially under a spinnaker. The larger headsail and smaller mainsail takes more effort when tacking and may make these boats less attractive as family cruisers. Add to this the Lancer's long, fat, and shallow keel, and you have a boat that requires constant attention to the helm, is a bit tricky to tack or jibe, and makes noticeable leeway.

The few Lancer 25s that are raced have PHRF ratings of 264. By comparison, the popular Cal 25 outboard model, of which there are large fleets, rates mostly 222 seconds per mile, as does the shoal-keel Catalina 25.

### Things to check out

The simplicity of the boat makes for a short list of things to check out. Besides age-related issues, there's

always the potential for a wet and delaminated core. Sound carefully for leaks around deck fittings, especially stanchions. There have been reports of leaking portlights, but this is an easy fix. Remove the interior side panels and examine the hull-to-deck joint, which could be damaged in a hard docking. The boat originally came with wire-to-rope halyards. If they have been replaced with all-rope halyards, make sure that the masthead sheaves were also replaced.

### Conclusion

Taken overall, the construction of the Lancer 25 is above average, and its rigging and controls are adequate. Its hollowed-out keel gives this trailer-sailer "space appeal." At 3,400 pounds displacement, this boat must be towed by an SUV or pickup truck. Its sailing qualities are fair and it is best suited for protected waters, such as inland lakes and reservoirs. Expect to pay \$2,500 to \$4,000, keeping in mind that condition is everything. *▲*

*Gregg Nestor, a contributing editor with Good Old Boat, has had a lifelong interest in all things aquatic. Gregg has written several books, including The Trailer Sailer Owner's Manual: Buy-Outfit-Trail-Maintain. Last June, he and his wife, Joyce, took delivery of a 1994 Caliber 35 and spent the next two months refitting and addressing some neglected maintenance issues so they could go sailing.*





# Morgan 25

**A low-priced club racer and shoal-water cruiser**

by Allen Penticoff

Needing a break from winter, my wife and I flew to St. Petersburg, Florida, to participate in the inaugural Good Old Boat Regatta, held last January. With the help of the St. Petersburg Sailing Association's regatta coordinator, Steve Lang, I was able to crew on a Morgan 25. This let me have some fun on the water with owner Grover Griffin and also gave me an opportunity to review a classic boat.

Grover bought his 1975 Morgan Classic 250 (a version of the Morgan 25) from a cruising couple in 1979 and set it up for racing — about 60 races a year in the Tampa Bay area. *Odyssey's* bright yellow hull is well known and respected in bay area racing circles.

## Design

Charley Morgan was a well-known designer and boatbuilder in the St. Petersburg area where, in the 1960s, he was something of a pioneer in the new medium of fiberglass. Morgan has numerous designs to his credit, from a 22-foot trailer sailer to 60-foot offshore racers and world cruisers. After winning the Southern Ocean

Racing Circuit (SORC) in 1961 and '62 aboard his 40-foot *Paper Tiger*, Morgan formed Morgan Yachts. He always had an interest in racing and most of his designs sail well. An exception might be the aft-cabin Out Island 41, a breakthrough design that helped establish the Caribbean charter trade but sometimes needed the jib backed to come about.

In 1984, after several changes of hands, Morgan Yachts was sold to Catalina Yachts, which built the OI 41 for a few more years before retiring the molds and the Morgan name. (For more on the man and his company, see "Charley Morgan and the Fiberglass Factory," March/April 2005.)

The impetus behind the Morgan 25 was the popularity of competition-worthy Midget Ocean Racing Club (MORC) yachts and growing demand in the late 1960s for inexpensive and easy-to-maintain fiberglass sailboats. The market was flooding with new designs for a new breed of sailors.

The Morgan 25 has an LOA of 24 feet 11 inches and was first called the Morgan 24. The 24, 25, and Classic 250 have the same hull. Grover's Classic

At the St. Petersburg, Florida, Good Old Boat Regatta last January, *Odyssey*, a Morgan Classic 250, took third in her class. Her near sister, *Amanda*, a Morgan 24, on facing page, managed to scoot away from *Odyssey* on the first leg, but fast spinnaker work aboard the yellow boat turned the tables.

250 has a thicker deck, which, along with some other changes, makes it 700 pounds heavier than the other models. Production of the three began in 1965 and ran to 1976, with 460 hulls completed. The Classic 250 was only built in 1974 and 1975.

The Morgan 25 has simple yet attractive lines, with a spoon bow, gentle sheer, a bit of tumblehome in the low topsides, and a counter transom. The cabin trunk transitions into gently sloping cockpit coamings. Below the water, firm bilges provide good initial form stability. The long stub-keel/centerboard combination has 1,900 pounds of lead ballast and draws 2 feet 9 inches with the centerboard up and 6 feet 6 inches with the board down.

Grover converted *Odyssey* back to a centerboard boat after a previous

## “The Morgan 25 has wide sidedecks that are quite usable for going forward.”

owner had modified the boat with a fixed keel. Some early boats may have had cast iron or bronze centerboards. The rudder is a balanced spade well aft of a large cutaway in the keel and steering is with a tiller. A Universal Atomic 4 or diesel inboard engine was available as an option to the standard outboard motor.

### Construction

The hull is hand-laid sandwich fiberglass, 5/8-inch thick, cored with “Q Cell.” The hull-to-deck joint is a standard shoebox type in which the overlapping deck flange is caulked and through-bolted to the hull. The inside of the joint is glassed over. On later boats, pop rivets were used in place of the bolts — a less desirable method. At the edge of the deck is a molded toerail capped by a teak strip.

A cut-out in the transom allows for direct attachment of an outboard motor on centerline, although some boats were built without this feature.

The underside of the deck is gelcoated — no fiberglass liner, no vinyl panels. A fiberglass hull-liner pan forms the foundation for the interior furniture.

The centerboard and trunk are entirely below the cabin sole. This creates room in the cabin but places all the hardware below the waterline, leading to leaks and corrosion problems. The centerboard is controlled with a removable crank handle to port near the helm.

### On deck

*Odyssey's* cabin trunk is fitted with six non-opening portlights (the number

varies with vintage). Two teak hand-holds (or stainless steel in *Odyssey's* case) per side on the cabin top are well placed, while the teak companionway slides add some class.

A large, solid-fiberglass hatch just forward of the tabernacle-stepped mast provides good ventilation. There is no anchor locker forward, so some arrangement would need to be made to carry the anchor below or stow it on deck. There is no dedicated location for the outboard's fuel tank.

Unlike most smaller boats with a cabin trunk, the Morgan 25 has wide sidedecks that are quite usable for going forward. However, the chain-plates are located in the middle of them, necessitating a hop onto the cabin top to get around them. The abundant

non-skid surface provides good traction even when the boat heels.

The cockpit coamings deflect water and, capped with teak, are wide enough for sitting on when working the winches. They also provide nice back support for sitting on the 8-foot-long cockpit seats. Earlier boats had two large hatches in the cockpit seats, while on later versions only the port seat opens to the hull interior. In both versions there is plenty of storage space for lines, fenders, and gear.

A stainless-steel bow pulpit and single lifelines keep crew aboard. On *Odyssey* and *Amanda*, a Morgan 24 I also inspected in St. Petersburg, the lifelines start low to the deck to allow the foot of a genoa to pass outside the lifelines.



### Resources

#### Morgan Yacht Owners Group

<http://mailer.fsu.edu/~kklein>

#### The Morgan Yacht Club

[www.charleymorgan.com](http://www.charleymorgan.com)

#### Morgan Sailboats

[www.morganboat.org](http://www.morganboat.org)

#### Bob Horan's Morgan 24 website

<http://members.cox.net/morgan24site>



## Trailerable boat



The foredeck of the Morgan 25 is uncluttered and the lifelines terminate low on the pulpit so the foot of the genoa can clear them, at left. The 8-foot cockpit can seat a crowd and the coamings provide plenty of back support, at right.

### Belowdecks

Stepping aboard *Odyssey I* quickly saw that she has no accommodations. Grover had removed the interior and installed plywood bins for handy sail stowage during races. This stripped a lot of weight out of the boat. He also reinforced the bulkhead to withstand mast compression and upgraded the rigging and chainplates. I could see plain as day the complex cable rigging for raising and lowering the centerboard. Headroom is 5 feet 6 inches.

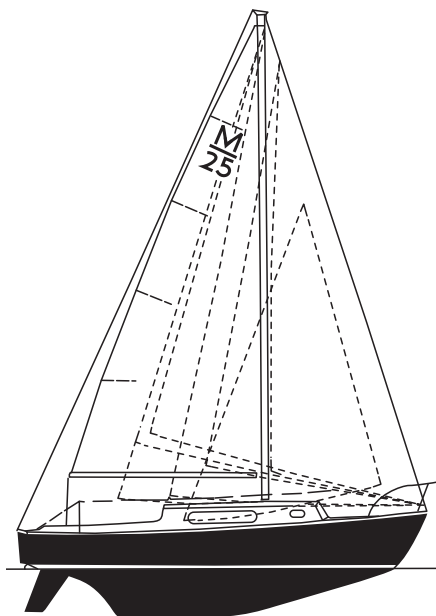
Later, I went aboard *Amanda* for a brief look at a stock interior from the 1960s. There I found the standard V-berth forward and a portable toilet beneath it. Aft of the forward cabin bulkhead, to port and starboard, are fiberglass cabinets forming a small galley and storage area. Depending on the year the boat was built, these cabinets were trimmed with mahogany or oiled American walnut. The starboard side features a sink, an icebox that drains to the bilge, and storage spaces. A stove can be located on the work area to port. Aft of the galley, the saloon seats extend under the cockpit to form quarter berths. The inside of the hull is lined with fabric.

In an optional roomier cabin arrangement, a dinette that converts to a berth is to port and the galley to starboard.

Water capacity can be 15 to 20 gallons in tanks of varying construction.

### Rig

The standard masthead-sloop rig has single spreaders and single lower



### Morgan 24/25

**Designer:** Charley Morgan  
**Builder:** Morgan Yachts  
**LOA:** 24 feet 11 inches  
**LWL:** 21 feet 6 inches  
**Beam:** 8 feet 0 inches  
**Draft, board up:** 2 feet 9 inches  
**Draft, board down:** 6 feet 6 inches  
**Displacement (24/25):** 5,000 pounds  
**Displacement (Classic 250):** 5,700 pounds  
**Ballast:** 1,900 pounds  
**Sail area:** 310 square feet  
**Disp./LWL ratio (24/25):** 225  
**Disp./LWL ratio (Classic 250):** 256  
**Sail area/disp.ratio (24/25):** 17.0  
**Sail area/disp.ratio (Classic 250):** 15.5  
**PHRF rating:** 234

shrouds. Grover shortened *Odyssey's* shrouds and rigged double lower shrouds. He also added an adjustable split backstay, which is a common modification. All the 24/25s had roller-reefing booms and boltrope mainsails, but many, if not most, have been modified for slides on the sail and eschew use of the roller reefing.

The standard mainsheet system has an end-of-boom bridle. Some owners have fitted mid-boom sheeting and a traveler forward, as on *Amanda*. To keep the cockpit clear, others have fitted a traveler aft of the helm, as on *Odyssey*. The standard headsail track is mounted on the toerail, whereas Grover mounted *Odyssey's* inboard. He also led his halyards aft to the cockpit and installed self-tailing winches. *Odyssey* has a foil on the headstay, while other Morgan 25s may have hanked-on sails or roller furling.

### Under way

I joined Grover and his three crew for the Good Old Boat Regatta, which started near The Pier on the St. Petersburg waterfront within easy watching distance from shore. We were in the spinnaker class. The two other divisions, "cruising" and "fun," sailed a shorter course. All sailed the course twice. We did well on the start, but ended up chasing the stealthy *Amanda* up the windward leg of the triangular course to the first mark. *Amanda* may not look like much at her slip, with her faded blue hull and deck, but when the Kevlar sails come out you know she's not going to be a pushover.

The air was light, and on the second leg it was a tossup between staying with the genoa and launching the big yellow asymmetrical spinnaker. We switched to the spinnaker before *Amanda* did and slowly overtook her. With *Amanda* safely behind us, I took the helm for the second lap.

The boat felt stiff enough and stable, particularly with the centerboard down. The helm had a firm feel without being heavy. When the sails were trimmed in hard, there was a very light weather helm. When tacking or jibing, the boat was very responsive. It turned fairly quickly, although not dinghy-like due to the long stub keel. I felt some vibration in the tiller from turbulence generated by the centerboard slot. Whether sailing to windward or off the wind, tracking was very straight; this boat could probably be trimmed to sail hands-free.

It was fun watching all the other classes of boats milling about and, because of the two courses and overlap of time, the last leg got crowded toward the finish. The race committee had moved the finish line to very near The Pier and, once we arrived, the combination of no wind and some current made crossing the line agonizingly slow. As soon as we drifted over the line, Grover fired up the outboard, and *Odyssey* moved nicely under power.

There was a big do at the St. Petersburg Yacht Club later on where awards were presented. *Odyssey* turned in a creditable third-place finish and was only two minutes out of first place on corrected time. Her PHRF rating had been 222, but Grover is protesting this rating since he learned that sail area on the Classic 250 is less than the standard

“Whether sailing to windward or off the wind, tracking was very straight; this boat could probably be trimmed to sail hands-free.”

Morgan 25. These few seconds per mile have cost him a number of races — including this regatta. For comparison, the two biggest fleets of Cal 25s rate 222 and 231, and the much newer J/24 rates between 165 and 174.

Based on the design, I would suspect the Morgan 25 would be a bit tender in breezier conditions due to its shoal-draft keel, but it should perform very well on any point of sail and take most seas in stride. Grover reports reaching a maximum speed of 6.3 knots.

### Conclusion

Grover shows that one can take a relatively inexpensive boat and, with some elbow grease and investment in upgraded systems, make it competitive for racing. The Morgan 24/25 still seems to be a popular low-cost racer/cruiser. Mix in a good crew and you have a formula for exciting and fun-filled weekends. Leave the interior stock, as in *Amanda*, and you can enjoy racing while still being ready for the occasional cruise or overnight. The shallow draft makes it an ideal gunkhole explorer. With a road-legal 8-foot beam, the boat is trailerable, which opens up many sailing opportunities while reducing ownership expenses.

Problem areas are typical of any 30- to 40-year-old boat, but the Morgan's

construction is not known for any severe weaknesses. Trouble can arise with the centerboard pendant, pivot pin, and a weakly supported turning sheave under the cabin sole, which requires vigilant and frequent inspection, particularly in salt water. Also look for gate valves on through-hulls. These should be replaced with proper seacocks.

While the early 24s were of somewhat better quality construction, the Morgan 25 is still a solid buy, and there are plenty of these boats to supply the market. Some were sold as kits and these amateur-built boats can vary substantially in quality. Prices range vastly, from derelict boats at giveaway prices to well-found examples in the \$6,000 range. *▲*

*Allen Penticoff is a freelance writer, sailor, and longtime aviator. He has trailer-sailed on every Great Lake and on many inland waters and has had keelboat adventures on fresh and salt water. He presently owns three sailboats: an American 14.5, a MacGregor 26D, and a 1955 Beister 42-foot steel cutter that he's restoring.*



***Amanda* has the standard layout for a Morgan 24. A V-berth (here filled with sails) occupies the bow, at left. The galley is forward in the saloon and the settees extend under the cockpit as quarter berths, at right.**







Courtesy of Mark Ellis Design

As she plows through the water, at left, or rests at a dock, below, the Nonsuch shows the plumb bow, vertical transom, and roomy sidedecks characteristic of the Nonsuch line.

Hackett Cummins' *Pelican*, on opposite page, sails the Mississippi Gulf Coast. Her stubby bowsprit is capable of holding two anchors at the ready.

# The Nonsuch 26

*A catboat with standing headroom and fixed keel?  
Here's onesuch*

*by Bill Sandifer*

I'VE ALWAYS LOVED CATBOATS BUT NEVER owned one. There always seemed to be limiting factors that made me look for a sloop or cutter. It boils down to lack of headroom. I love the look but want to be able to stand up to pull my pants on! Hackett Cummins had cruised a Marshall 22 for a number of years and had come to the realization that it would be nice to be able to stand up down below. He bought a Nonsuch 26 and named her *Pelican*. I guess Gordon Fisher felt the same way.

The Nonsuch was the inspiration of Gordon Fisher, a respected Canadian sailor who was, at that time, CEO of Southam, Inc., Commodore of the Royal Canadian Yacht Club, and co-skipper of the custom C&C *Red Jacket* when it won the Southern Ocean Racing Circuit.

When this hotshot sailor decided to go cruising, he had some distinct requirements that were not represented by production sailboats on the market. He admired the Ljungstrom rig with a freestanding mast and no boom, believing it to be a perfect singlehanded rig. He took the idea of a one-sail catboat with a keel and full

headroom, to yacht designer Mark Ellis for further development.

Mark drew an unstayed mast but convinced Gordon to include a sailboard-style wishbone boom for better sail control. It was a viable idea, but it did not have a builder.

Enter George Hinterhoeller of St. Catherine's, Ontario. George was cool to the idea of the Nonsuch. He was not in love with New England-style catboats.

Eventually, Gordon and Mark convinced him that a fin-keeled balanced hull, with a single sail and a spade rudder, would not have to have the undesirable characteristics of a catboat, primarily heavy weather helm.

She could have full standing headroom and a balanced helm in a whis-



Courtesy of Mark Ellis Design

per and a blow. The Nonsuch was born.

**More than 1,000**

Production started in 1978 and continued until 1995, with two breaks due to changes in company ownership. In all, more than 1,000 boats were built. Nonsuch sailboats were built in 22, 26, 30, 33, and 36 feet. Two additional models were introduced — the 324 and the 354 — which were versions of the 30 and the 33, respectively, but with different interiors.

The 26 and 30 were both built as “Classics” with the galley and head amidships, port and starboard settees, a single quarterberth to port, and a double quarterberth to starboard (see illustration on Page 8).

*“Pelican is a really big boat with a plumb bow and vertical transom . . . simply speaking, a lot of boat.”*

The “Ultra 26” layout had a starboard-side galley, head aft, no quarter berths, an L-shaped dinette opposite the galley to port, and a double bunk forward of the dinette to port.

A hanging locker and small seat was opposite the double bunk to starboard. Hackett Cummins’ *Pelican*, hull #195, has the Ultra interior.

The 26-foot Ultra is well laid out for a couple, while the 26-foot Classic sleeps up to five on two settees forward and the two-and-one-half quarter berths aft. It is something of a stretch to call the starboard quarter berth a double, but it would be a luxurious single for most anyone.

The name Nonsuch is interesting.

Whether she was named because there was nothing like her on the market or for a Canadian historical personality — Baroness Nonsuch of Nonsuch Park in Surrey England — is open for discussion. I prefer to think it was





named because there was “none such” designed when it was introduced. (Actually, Mark Ellis tells us that the name came from the first trading ship used by the Hudson’s Bay Company. Perhaps the ship was named after Baroness Nonsuch. A replica of this 60+ foot ship is on display in Winnipeg, Manitoba. –Ed.)

The fit and finish of Pelican are to George Hinterhoeller’s high standards. He also built the Niagara line of sailboats and had a sterling reputation.

### Large and beamy

As befits a catboat, this is a large 26-footer with a beam of 10 feet 6 inches and a waterline length of 24 feet 4 inches. There is 6 feet 3 inches of headroom in the main cabin. In many ways this 26-footer is the equal of my 31-foot Eldridge-McInnis sloop which is 31 feet overall and 24 feet 6 inches on the waterline with a beam of 9 feet 6 inches. It has more than 6 feet of headroom down below, too.

*Pelican* is a really big boat with a plumb bow and vertical transom ... simply speaking, a lot of boat. The cockpit, catboat style, extends almost to the hull

*Pelican*, at right and far right below, has the Ultra 26 layout. The interior of a Classic 26 Nonsuch is shown at left below.

*“The boat sails like a big dinghy with just a genoa flying. In fact, the big sail trims like a genoa, rather than a main.”*

sides and is extremely roomy. There are usable side decks outboard of the cockpit but no lazarette. The boat is therefore missing some stowage that my boat’s lazarette offers. As I only store mops, buckets, and fenders there, I wouldn’t miss mine as long as there were good cockpit lockers.

Fortunately, the Nonsuch has good, big, easily accessed cockpit lockers. One of the items in my lazarette is a spare anchor, but the Nonsuch 26 takes care of that with a short, but robust, bowsprit with plenty of room for two anchors.

Once you are forward of the cockpit, going forward is easy. The grabrails run the full length of the coachhouse, and you can hold on to the mast at the bow. *Pelican* has lifelines, but I would rather be bent over a little lower and inboard, holding on to the handrails. The lifelines are fine for grandchildren to hold on to in quiet water, which is what Hackett’s grandchildren like to do.

Rain or spray is kept in control by recessed drains in the deck at the low spot. These empty through pipes below the waterline. There is no stain running down the topsides. The hull-to-deck joint is covered by a heavy-duty aluminum extrusion that incorporates built-in chocks. There is a substantial stern rail incorporating the stern boarding ladder.



Courtesy of Mark Ellis Design



*“The unstayed mast is very flexible and bends to leeward in the puffs, spilling wind from the sail.”*

### Halyards led aft

*Pelican* has winches mounted on the coachhouse for the main halyard and two reefing lines and the mainsheet winch in the cockpit aft. All halyards are led aft to the cockpit under the dodger.

The only other things on deck are the varnished eyebrows over the five opening ports and two hatches in the coachhouse roof. With the companionway hatch sliding open under the sea hood, there is plenty of ventilation below. *Pelican* is not fitted with an anchor windlass, but there is room for one forward of the mast. Fitting it with the mast in place would be a good exercise for a contortionist.

*Pelican* is equipped with a Westerbeke 18 A diesel. Some Nonsuch 26s were fitted with a Volvo Sail Drive, some with a 13-horsepower Westerbeke, and some with engines up to a 25 horsepower. I prefer the 18- to 21-horsepower diesel for its smoothness (4 cylinders), but the Nonsuch will be responsive with any of the engines mentioned — just be sure the prop is free of barnacles. More on this later. With a fuel tank capacity of 24 gallons, a water tank capacity of 64 gallons, and a 24-gallon holding tank, the boat has good cruising range.

Average fuel consump-

tion should be between .7 and 1.2 gallons per hour at hull speed for a range under power of about 130 miles at 2,500 rpm. Maximum speed under power should be about 6.6 knots. Hackett reports that *Pelican* does 6.5 knots with a clean bottom. This is excellent for a 26-foot boat. The displacement is 8,500 pounds with a ballast/displacement ratio of 32 percent on a long waterline. Draft is 4 feet 6 inches and, as already noted, beam is 10 feet 6 inches. Sail area is 420 square feet with some real power for light conditions. With a cat's cradle of lines between the two spars of the wishbone boom, reefing is easy. Drop the sail into the cradle and tie off the reefing lines. The sail hangs below the boom when stored, making it easy to cover the sail for an evening.

### Sails like a dinghy

Hackett says sailing the Nonsuch is different from what you might expect. The boat



There are no quarter berths in the Ultra 26 layout, at left; a cooler and nav station is located where one quarter-berth would be positioned. *Pelican* has a double bunk forward, bottom left, with a hanging locker and small seat opposite. The head, bottom right, is aft.





sails like a big dinghy with just a genoa flying. In fact, the big sail trims like a genoa, rather than a main. She is very responsive to the helm as long as you don't overtrim the sail. According to Hackett, there is no weather helm up to about 20 knots of wind, at which point it is time to reef anyway. The unstayed mast is very flexible and bends to leeward in the puffs, spilling wind from the sail. When Hackett first owned the boat, he deliberately tried to put the rail under and found he could not make the boat do it. He believes the keel and mast balance each other so well that the result is one very stiff, but not uncomfortable, boat.

While the Nonsuch and Freedom rigs have the wishbone spar in common, the details vary significantly. The Freedom wishbone rig uses a two-ply sail that surrounds the mast like the sock on a boardboat sail, and the wishbone moves up and down with the sail. The Nonsuch rig uses a single-ply sail attached to a track with slugs. The forward end of the boom hangs from hanger lines, and the spar is pulled toward the mast with a "choker," a line which is led to the cockpit. Tightening the choker pulls the forward end of the boom toward the mast, which has the effect of flat-



*Pelican's unstayed mast, above, is very flexible, bending to leeward in the puffs spilling wind from the sail. An overview of the Classic Nonsuch layout, below.*

tening the sail by moving the after end of the boom away from the mast. The choker is used like an outhaul to control the amount of draft in the sail. As with all catboats, reefing early rather than late is good seamanship. Reefing is simply a matter of slacking the main halyard, taking up on the pre-rigged reefing line, and re-tightening the main halyard. All this is easily accomplished from the cockpit. The sail area that has been reduced falls into the lazy-jacks below the wishbone boom.

### Propeller changed

When she was first purchased, *Pelican* had a fixed three-bladed propeller. This was changed to an automatically feathering three-bladed prop with marked improvement in sailing quality and no decrease in powered performance. Last fall, when we attempted to sail, the prop was encased in barnacles and would not function. There were so many barnacles, the prop could not be rotated to provide power. A diver was called, and we put off sea trials for another day. Hurricane season arrived before we had another opportunity to sail *Pelican*.

On Memorial Day weekend of this year we got out at last for a fine sail. The boat handles as reported with none of the weather helm usually associated with catboats. Raising the sail is easy. We had a most pleasurable day and a good sail. ⚓



### Nonsuch

- Designer:** Mark Ellis
- LOA:** 26 feet 0 inches
- LWL:** 24 feet 4 inches
- Beam:** 10 feet 6 inches
- Draft:** 4 feet 6 inches
- Displacement:** 8,500 pounds
- Sail area:** 420 square feet
- Ballast:** 2,750 pounds



*Courtesy of Mark Ellis Design*

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# O'Day 26

## *A maxi trailersailer for inland and coastal waters*

by Allen Penticoff

*Martha J.*, an O'Day 26, cuts an impressive wake on Madison, Wisconsin's, Lake Mendota, just one of many bodies of water her owners will take her to in any given season.

**T**he O'Day 26 is one of the last models in a long line that originated with George O'Day, the 1960 Olympic Gold Medal sailor and boatbuilder. Among the 76 models bearing his name is the 16-foot 9-inch Daysailer, a pioneering fiberglass sailboat that helped bring sailing to the masses. His lasting contribution to the world of sailing may be that his designs were all well found, modern yet conservative, and marketed to the public in a way that assured the company would survive. Some of the greatest runs of sailboats rolled out the O'Day factory doors, so we find them plying the waters everywhere. (See May 2002 *Good Old Boat* for a profile of George O'Day.)

By the time the O'Day 26 came along in 1984, George O'Day was pretty much out of the picture (he died at age 64 in 1987). He'd sold the company to Bangor Punta that, in turn, sold it in 1983 to

Lear Siegler. In production between 1984 and 1986, the O'Day 26 is not to be confused with the 1960s-era O'Day 26 which was a Phillip Rhodes design, or the Gary Mull-designed Ranger 26 built for Ranger by O'Day and sold through its dealer network.

Rather, the later O'Day 26 is a slightly extended version of the O'Day 25, the production of which ended with the arrival of the 26. It was designed by C. Raymond Hunt Associates, with John Deknatel serving as the chief designer and assisted by Winn Willard, Peter Boyce, and John Kiley. It takes a sharp eye to tell the 25 and the 26 apart as most of the differences between them are in sail area, ballast, minor window changes, and a little lengthening. Approximately 87 were built. Our test boat, owned by Bill and Martha Siegworth of Beloit, Wisconsin, was marketed as a 25th Anniversary model (1959-1984) but sold as a 1985.

Whether left in a slip, at a mooring, or towed on a trailer each time out, the O'Day 26 provides a spacious platform for coastal and inland-lake sailing. The Siegworths often tow their *Martha J.* to Lake Mendota at Madison, Wisconsin. At other times, they take her on extended vacations of a week or more to places as far afield as Bayfield, Wisconsin; Grand Traverse Bay, Michigan; and Kentucky Lake.

### Design

The O'Day 26 has a subtle sheer and a modest reverse transom which, combined with a straight bow angle and rakish cabin trunk, make it a fine boat to look at. Despite the substantial freeboard needed to provide standing headroom and reasonable accommodations in the cabin, the O'Day 26 does not come off as being overly boxy. The road-legal 8-foot beam and firm bilges provide good initial stability as well as plenty of storage space.

While the builder's brochure hints that a fixed-keel version of the 26 was available, it appears none were ever built. The 26 has a 6-foot 8-inch-long lead-ballasted stub keel with a weighted centerboard, a configuration it shares with the O'Day 23 and 25. The boat carries 1,850 pounds of ballast and draws 2 feet 6 inches with the board up, 6 feet with it down. Overall displacement is 4,800 pounds, making this one of the largest trailerable sailboats available.

Whereas most O'Day 26s have tiller steering and an outboard motor on a transom bracket, the Siegworths' boat has the Edson wheel steering and inboard Yanmar diesel options. The rudder on all versions is outboard.

### Construction

The hull is fabricated of solid hand-laid fiberglass while the deck is of balsa-cored sandwich construction. The deck is bonded to the hull with adhesive and mechanically fastened, with an aluminum-and-rubber rubrail capping the joint. A molded-fiberglass inner liner forms the berth flats and cabin sole.

A few teak details on deck give the O'Day 26 a touch of class without creating a maintenance chore. Bill added some wood by fabricating a

## “A few teak details on deck give the O’Day 26 a touch of class without creating a maintenance chore.”

beautiful teak rim for the wheel and a mahogany instrument holder. He also installed an aftermarket teak cockpit table. Teak grabrails along the cabin trunk make for good holding while going forward along the wide side-decks. The commodious cockpit has 6-foot 8-inch x 19-inch seats and a wide bridgedeck. The large companionway was originally fitted with solid-wood hatchboards, but on the *Martha J.*, they have been replaced by three tinted Lexan panels to admit more light below.

### On deck

In the cockpit, a 24-inch-long locker on the port side provides storage. (On outboard-motor models, the gas tank goes here.) Aft on the starboard side is a handy 18-inch insulated beverage cooler that drains to the cockpit scupper. Forward of the cooler is a 35-inch-long locker that, on models with inboard engines, opens to the engine below and provides access to the shaft packing gland. This locker becomes home to fenders, lines, brushes, and

assorted boat maintenance items. Working on the engine through this locker would necessitate emptying it of all the stored items and crawling in. Another large access panel to port in the area of the quarter berth makes overall access to the engine quite good.

Single lifelines and bow and stern pulpits keep people where they need to be — on the boat. When they’re off the boat, a long swim ladder gets them back aboard. An anchor locker forward accommodates a Danforth-type anchor and adequate rode and chain for coastal cruising. *Martha J.* has two small stainless-steel bow rollers for anchoring and chocks with good-sized cleats for tying off lines. The toerail is a raised section of the deck molding capped with a teak strip that ends at the bow chocks. A large tinted hatch mounted on the forward end of the cabin trunk lets in plenty of air. Two opening portlights with screens ventilate the head areas and large dark-plastic Euro-style

windows mounted flush on each side of the cabin trunk pass plenty of light into the saloon. Molded non-skid in an easy-on-the-eyes almond color provides secure footing.

### Accommodations

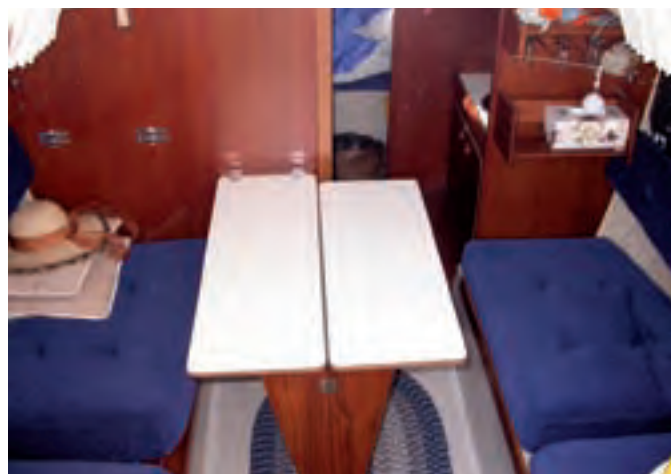
After descending the three wide teak steps into the cabin you find yourself with 5 feet 6½ inches of headroom that slopes lower going forward. The overhead is molded fiberglass with a pebbled texture to its surface. At your feet is a teak-and-holly floorboard which lifts out for access to the shallow bilge. Behind the companionway ladder is the electrical panel and a small storage area. To starboard is a stainless sink and icebox combo. The self-draining icebox is a substantial 23 inches x 24 inches and 20 inches deep and is well lit by an overhead fixture. Also to starboard is a Plexiglas-fronted locker and a hinged panel that swings down to reveal the cookstove. The original equipment was a small alcohol stove that the Siegworths swapped



For its size, the O’Day 26 has a large, well-equipped foredeck and a roomy anchor locker. *Martha J.* has twin anchor rollers and roller furling on the jib, above. Bill Siegworth dressed up *Martha J.* with a custom teak steering wheel, instrument panel, and drink holder, at right.







Aboard *Martha J*, the cooking is done on a portable butane stove. It rests on a panel that folds down to expand the small galley work area, at left. The dinette table mounts on the main bulkhead. Fully opened, it seats four, at right. The starboard leaf folds back to allow passage forward.

out for a Kenyon butane stove. Water tankage is 15 gallons. The Siegworths have added an electric pressure pump.

Panels throughout the cabin are a teak-pattern laminate over plywood that gives the interior an air of quality and attention to detail. The original dark blue uncut-corduroy upholstery has held up well. The starboard settee is 5 feet 9 inches x 29 inches while the settee to port is 5 feet 8 inches x 30 inches and slides out to become a comfy 44-inch-wide berth. The port berth gains some sleeping length as it abuts the 6-foot 6-inch x 35-inch quarter berth. Storage abounds under both saloon settees and both have an upholstered back support that runs along the bottom edge of the fiddled bookshelf storage just below the sidedecks.

In the saloon, the table hinges down from the main bulkhead, and can be left half-folded to allow passage forward.

Original equipment included a chemical toilet in the head, but the Siegworths exchanged it for a composting toilet. The head has a privacy door, a vanity sink, and a storage area opposite to starboard. The V-berth forward is 6 feet wide, 5 feet 8 inches deep, and has a removable insert. In the cabin areas, the hull is lined with beige upholstery fabric.

## Rig

The masthead rig is robust for a trailerable boat. The deck-stepped mast has a single set of spreaders, forestay, backstay, upper shrouds, and a single pair of lower shrouds.

Mast-mounted halyard winches did not come from the factory, but are often added. The mainsheet tackle

includes a Harken traveler on the bridge deck, mid-boom blocks, and a cam cleat. *Martha J* has roller furling on the jib and the Siegworths added the



Dutchman sail-containment system to a new full-battened mainsail. Sail area is 278 square feet, giving the O'Day 26 a generous sail area/displacement ratio of 17.3. A large genoa is often carried and the boat sails quite well under genoa alone.

With a gin-pole, a trailer-mounted winch, and some innovations in temporary rigging, the Siegworths easily rig their O'Day in less than an hour — with minimal detachment of rigging. They transport the boom and mainsail on deck, leaving the cabin clean. The O'Day 26 can be launched at any ramp where there's enough water to float it off the trailer. Bill says 4 feet at 30 feet from the water's edge is minimum and 5 feet is good. The Siegworths' boat, with trailer and gear, tips the scales at 7,700 pounds, which means they need a large vehicle for towing.

## Let's go sailing

I've sailed this boat many times with the Siegworths and with its previous owner. In fact, I've spent a lot of time on this boat and have often said, "I have dibs if you sell her." For people who need to trailer their boat and still want the amenities of a "yacht," few fit the bill like the O'Day 26. It has shoal-draft capabilities that will get it within wading distance of most shores and beaches, yet it's heavy enough to take a bit of a pounding when the wind pipes up and the waves get steep. It makes its 6-knot theoretical hull speed and then some. In a good blow, it'll top 7 knots. Under power, the 1-cylinder 8-hp Yanmar 1GM diesel with its two-bladed fixed prop pushes the boat over

## O'Day 26

**Designer:** c. raymond hunt associates

**LOA:** 25 feet 8½ inches

**LWL:** 21 feet 7 inches

**Beam:** 8 feet 0 inches

**Draft board up:** 2 feet 6 inches

**Draft board down:** 6 feet 0 inches

**Displacement:** 4,800 pounds (outboard model w/o motor)

**Ballast:** 1,850 pounds

**Sail area:** 278 square feet

**Displacement/LWL ratio:** 222

**Sail area/displacement ratio:** 17.3

**PHRF rating:** 240-246

7 knots as well. At lower cruising rpm it's very economical — the Siegworths and previous owners have gone whole seasons and burned only a couple of gallons of diesel. The boat is rated for a 15-hp outboard that would be more than adequate power. The diesel option has a 14-gallon aluminum fuel tank below the cockpit.

Steering is modestly precise; the long keel stub provides good tracking, but does inhibit turning agility some. Coming about is a leisurely process. When the wind blows, weather helm is not pronounced as long as adequate headsails are carried and the main reefed. Even when a gust makes the boat suddenly over-canvassed, it remains controllable and has little tendency to round up, owing in part to its rather large rudder.

The centerboard is raised and lowered by means of a lightly loaded line in the cockpit footwell and can be easily adjusted to help balance the boat. Both owners I've sailed with often have not put it down — and it doesn't really seem to affect handling much, although the one who is a racer says it helps with balance and other owners say it's helpful in a blow.

The O'Day 26 is relatively stiff, though attention to weight trim is necessary to obtain top performance. Under genoa alone, the boat balances well on all points of sail.

The O'Day 26 is first and foremost a cruising boat. While light-air performance is adequate, it takes a bit of a breeze to really get it going. I've found it has a pleasant motion during most inland-lake sailing, but at times on Lake Michigan it's been unable to blast through steep chop and the ride could get sloppy and uncomfortable. I would not consider this a "Lake Michigan boat" on any but the better days.

The New England PHRF ratings are 246 for the inboard version and 240 for the outboard model. For

## Resources

<<http://www.odayowners.com>>  
<<http://www.ihearttoday.com>>  
<<http://www.drmarine.com>>  
<[http://www.goodoldboat.com/resources\\_for\\_sailors/owners\\_associations.php](http://www.goodoldboat.com/resources_for_sailors/owners_associations.php)>  
<<http://oday26.googlepages.com>>

**The V-berth is wider than it is long, so tall people will have their feet pinched at the bow.**

comparison, the Ericson 25 trailersailer rates 235 and the MacGregor 26 rates 222.

## Conclusion

The O'Day 26 is truly an "average" cruising sailboat in all aspects of performance and handling.

With the small production run of 87 or so, O'Day 26s may be a bit hard to find but are well worth the search. Owning a trailerable boat of this size lets you enjoy the comfort and features of a keelboat while avoiding the cost of keeping it in a marina. You can also expand your sailing adventures to many faraway places.

Problem areas are few. A close inspection of the deck for core decay is necessary on any balsa-cored deck, and the usual chainplate areas should be examined too, but the O'Day 26 is not known for any inherent weakness in the deck. Hull blistering is reported infrequently. Some owners feel the stock tiller is weak and bendy and have upgraded to stiffer aftermarket tillers. Corrosion of the cylinder-head exhaust port caused by the raw-water cooling system is not uncommon with the 1GM diesel, and requires replacing the cylinder head.



An Internet search found prices ranging from a fixer-upper at \$3,500 to a high of \$15,900, though most are between \$7,000 and \$9,000, depending on condition and equipment.

In general, it's worth buying the more expensive, doted on, always-well-maintained boat than the cheap fixer-upper. Most well-cared-for machines, be they airplanes, boats, or cars, seem to have a good karma that carries on to the next owner, ensuring good times and few hassles, while the poorly cared-for seem to endlessly suffer from one problem after another. ▲

*Allen Penticoff is a freelance writer, sailor, and longtime aviator. He has trailersailed on every Great Lake and on many inland waters and has had keelboat adventures on fresh and salt water. He presently owns three sailboats: an American 14.5, a MacGregor 26D, and a 1955 Beister 42-foot steel cutter that he's restoring.*

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# O'Day 272

*A light-displacement coastal cruiser from the 1980s*

by Gregg Nestor

**G**EORGE O'DAY WAS THE ONLY sailor to win both an Olympic gold medal and the America's Cup. He won the 5.5-Meter class in the 1960 games held in Rome, and he crewed for Bus Mosbacher aboard *Intrepid* in the successful America's Cup defense of 1967. His love of sailing also prompted him to open a sailboat dealership and to move from there to building boats more to his own liking.

## Design

The O'Day Corporation's early product line featured boats designed by a variety of naval architects, including Philip Rhodes, Uffa Fox, Robert Baker, and Andrew Kostanecki. Designed in 1972 and introduced in 1973, the original O'Day 27 was drafted by Allen Gurney. It accounted for 724 hulls and was in production through 1982. Once the company's emphasis was redirected from small boats to larger vessels, the firm of C. Raymond Hunt Associates became O'Day's sole provider of boat designs, including the O'Day 272, our review boat. Introduced in 1986, this boat was produced until the company ceased operation in 1989.

The O'Day 272 is a coastal cruiser designed to be fast and nimble, moderately light and lively, and easily sailed by a crew of two or even single-

handed. It was manufactured in two versions: the standard 272 and the 272 LE, which offers additional refinements such as an inboard engine.

The O'Day 272 displays little sheer, moderate freeboard and bow overhang, and a slightly rounded reverse transom. Possessing a streamlined appearance, the low-profile cabin slopes forward with its roofline converging with the boat's other lines at the stemhead fitting. This — along with its “visually connected” Euro-style portlights — gives the boat the appearance of forward movement whether at rest or underway.

## Construction

The one-piece hull is a solid, hand-laid fiberglass laminate, while the decks, cabintop, and cockpit sole are a sandwich of two layers of fiberglass with a core of end-grained balsa wood. The hull-to-deck joint is lapped, sealed with a marine adhesive/sealant, mechanically fastened, and covered with an aluminum-and-vinyl gunwale guard. A molded fiberglass pan, which designates the various cabin features — such as sole and berth foundations — extends throughout the boat's interior. It's bonded to the hull at two levels to increase stiffness and hull strength. Its top edge terminates at seat height. A foam-backed fabric hull liner begins

where the pan leaves off and continues upward, eventually merging with a similar fabric headliner. These fabric liners provide insulation and reduce noise and condensation.

The boat's wing keel is a solid lead casting fastened onto the bilge sump with stainless-steel bolts and sealed with a polyurethane compound. The boat's draft is just 35 inches, yet it has 1,870 pounds of ballast. This wing-keel design keeps the center of gravity low, which counteracts heeling. The rudder is foam-cored fiberglass. It is transom-mounted and connected to a varnished ash tiller. The LE version of the O'Day 272 came standard with pedestal wheel steering engineered by Edson.

Dual lifelines were standard on the 272 LE; singles on the 272. Other deck hardware is of good quality and adequately sized. Backing plates can be found behind major hardware, such as stanchions, traveler, and winches. The handrails, deck organizer, and rope clutches are backed with large stainless-steel fender washers.

## Deck features

The deck surface features molded non-skid for sure footing and a two-tone color scheme to ease the effects of sun glare. On the foredeck, amenities include a pair of 7-inch mooring cleats, an anchor locker, and a stainless-steel bow pulpit. The sidedecks are 12

inches wide and bordered by a molded fiberglass toerail capped with teak. Lifelines run aft from the bow pulpit and connect to a split stern pulpit.

Forward, on the sloping portion of the cabintop, is a large translucent hatch. A fixed skylight, just aft of the mast, is situated over the main cabin. On the cabintop are teak handrails of a contemporary design mounted on custom-molded bases. There are three Euro-style smoked acrylic portlights on each side. The forward portlight on each side opens; the others are fixed.

The cockpit is spacious, with seats measuring 6½ feet long. The seat bottoms are properly sloped, as are the 11-inch high coamings. This configuration affords reasonable back support and good bracing. There's a generous bridge deck and a single, undersized 1½-inch scupper. Beneath the starboard cockpit seat is a deep locker that houses the batteries and the manual bilge pump. In order to operate the bilge pump, the locker must be in the open position. This is not a good arrangement. Just aft of the large locker is a small, vented locker for stowage of a remote gas tank.

Our review boat is equipped with

the optional inboard diesel engine. Its control panel is situated low on the inside of the transom and is subject to potential water damage. Just above the panel is a small cubbyhole built into the taffrail, which is billed as "stowage for small items" in the O'Day literature. The side facing into the cockpit is covered with a smoked acrylic panel and the top is open. Since no one seems to know what "small items" are best kept there, Terry Hynds, the owner of our review boat, uses it as a beverage holder. A swimming/boarding platform with a stainless-steel swimming ladder is molded into the port side of the transom. If the boat is not equipped with the optional inboard diesel, a multi-position outboard motor bracket is mounted on the starboard side.

### Belowdecks

Going below, especially when carrying bulky sailbags and gear, is easy because of the wide companionway opening. It is 34 inches at its widest and narrows to 24 inches. There is no sea hood. With an opening of this size, it's prudent to keep the sliding



**Terry Hynds' 1987 O'Day 272, *Margarita Hunter*, facing page. The 272 was in production from 1986 to 1989. Given its light displacement and the standard 130 percent genoa, this coastal cruiser is a spirited performer. The angled backrests, at right, make for comfortable cockpit seating. The base model is steered with a tiller, while the 272 LE is fitted with an Edson pedestal wheel.**

hatch and hatchboards in place when sailing, especially in foul weather. A three-step companionway ladder leads below to accommodations that are very straightforward.

While the V-berth initially appears to be on the smallish side, verging on claustrophobic, it measures a surpris-

## Who was George O'Day?

George O'Day was raised in Brookline, Massachusetts. From an early age he excelled at sailboat racing, winning an Olympic gold medal and the America's Cup. It was natural for George to get into the boatbuilding business (see article by Dan Spurr, May 2002).

According to his son Mark, George's whole premise was to bring fun daysailing to families. George O'Day Associates was formed in 1951 and became a distributor for several brands of boats. His first offerings included boats built by Fairey Marine in England. These were hot-molded mahogany boats coated with polyester resin by Cellon called Faireyglass. He also marketed Palmer Scott's Marscot line of fiberglass boats.

In 1958, George bought Marscot Plastics from Palmer Scott and changed the company's name to the O'Day Corporation. His first significantly successful boat was the Rhodes 19, followed by the 14-foot Javelin, the 12-foot 6-inch Widgeon, and the 15-foot Osprey. The latter three designs accounted for about 1,500 units. However, the most successful O'Day was the Day Sailer. This 16-foot 9-inch sloop was designed by Uffa Fox, who also shared George's love of small boats. More than 14,000 Day Sailers were built before it was reconfigured as the Day Sailer II. In the early 1960s, the company was quite profitable. With more than 70,000 boats sold, the O'Day Corporation

was the largest sailboat builder in the United States.

When George sold the company to Bangor Punta in 1966, the largest boat in the fleet was 22 feet. This was to change. The O'Day Corporation began building much larger boats — such as the O'Day 22, 23, and 25 pocket cruisers, the 27 and 30 keelboats, and the center-cockpit O'Day 32. Small boats gradually disappeared in favor of these larger family cruisers.

In 1983, Lear Siegler bought Bangor Punta and began a systematic upgrade of its aging product line. Rather than simply making a few cosmetic changes and calling the new model the Mk II version, many of the more successful boats were completely redesigned and given the suffix 2. These included the O'Day 222, 272, 302, and 322. These boats were more contemporary in style, roomier, and purportedly performed better than their predecessors.

The company was again sold in 1987, this time to L. T. Funston & Co. However, a recessionary economy and high fixed costs sealed the company's fate. The O'Day Corporation went out of business in 1989. When it closed its doors for good, its product line ranged from the Day Sailer to the O'Day 40, a joint venture with the French manufacturer Jeanneau. George O'Day died of cancer in July 1987.



## Review boat



**The head, top, spans the area just aft of the V-berth, with a molded sink and vanity to one side and either a portable or a fixed toilet on the other. The V-berth, second from top, is surprisingly long at 6 feet 10 inches. Nylon zippered pouches hang nearby for storage. In the main cabin, center, the starboard settee — shortened by the galley — measures just 5 feet 6 inches, compared to the port settee at 6 feet 8 inches. The compact galley, bottom, has the essentials for basic food preparation, including sink, icebox, and cooktop.**

ing 6 feet 10 inches long and 5 feet 6 inches wide. There's a removable insert, which provides some standing space (compliments of the forward hatch), and a wooden accordion-fold door for privacy. Beneath is bin-type stowage and the optional holding tank. Our review boat is fitted with optional V-berth storage pouches. These removable and transportable zippered pouches are made of nylon and are mounted on the hull above the berth on both sides.

Aft of the forward cabin is the athwartship head compartment. To port is the molded fiberglass vanity and sink with manual cold water, a locker, and a cabinet with mirror. Its one-piece construction is easy to clean. On the starboard side is a portable toilet or, in the case of our review boat, the optional marine head. Behind the head is a hanging locker. There is no shower. The boat's two opening portlights provide light and ventilation.

The main cabin is separated from the head area by means of a bi-fold wooden door. Mounted to the starboard bulkhead is a folding, drop-leaf table. The saloon, which is open, airy, and simple, consists of a pair of opposing settee berths, each 2 feet wide. The starboard one measures 5 feet 6 inches long, while the port settee measures 6 feet 8 inches. There are shelves behind both settee backs and stowage beneath the starboard settee. Under the port settee is the 25-gallon potable water tank. There are no overhead handholds.

### Two-burner cooktop

Further aft on the starboard side is the L-shaped galley, equipped with a two-burner Origo alcohol cooktop, a deep stainless-steel sink, a top-loading 3.5-cubic-foot icebox, and lockers for provisions, utensils, and cookware. On the 272 base model water from the icebox drains to the bilge. On the LE version of the 272 there's an icebox pump that discharges to the galley sink. The LE version also came

standard with pressurized hot and cold water. There are four fixed portlights in the cabin trunk and a fifth in the footwell panel of the bridge deck. The companionway provides additional illumination and fresh air.

Across from the galley, on the port side, is a cabinet with a fiddled countertop and bin stowage beneath. This provides the galley with additional counter space and separates the saloon from the port quarter berth.

At more than 7 feet long and 4 feet wide, the quarter berth is generous. There's stowage beneath it along with a full-length fiddled shelf above. On the LE version, but not on the standard model, a screened opening portlight opens to the cockpit footwell.

The bulkheads and cabinetry are teak-veneered marine plywood, while the companionway ladder and the bi-fold door are solid teak. The table and countertops are surfaced with an off-white plastic laminate. On the standard model the cabin sole is fiberglass with small teak-and-holly access hatches. The LE version has a varnished teak-and-holly sole. Headroom ranges from 6 feet 1 inch beneath the companionway hatch to 5 feet 10 inches at the forward bulkhead.

### The rig

The O'Day 272 is a masthead sloop with a bridge clearance of 34 feet 10 inches above the waterline. The mast is stepped on deck in a tabernacle. Both the mast and boom are anodized aluminum and incorporate internal sail tracks as part of the extrusions. The mast has a single pair of airfoil spreaders and is supported by a pair of cap shrouds, single lower shrouds, a headstay, and a single backstay. The shrouds terminate at inboard chainplates that are fastened to the forward bulkhead. Sail area is 298 square feet, which gives the 272 a sail area/displacement ratio of 16.6, typical of a coastal cruiser.

The mainsail came standard with one reef point and a single-line reefing system. The reefing line is led aft to



the cockpit and terminates at a line stopper on the port side. Both halyards are double-braided polyester and run inside the mast. They lead aft to the cockpit through rope clutches on the starboard side. Also situated on the starboard side is a cabintop-mounted Barlow #15 halyard/mainsheet winch. Additional running rigging, all of which has the option of being led aft, consists of a topping lift, internal overhaul, and a 4:1 vang. Barlow winches haven't been made for a long time, and replacement parts may be difficult to find. The best bet, if you need parts, is to scavenge parts from old winches for sale in marine consignment shops.

The tracks and cars for the genoa are on the sidedecks and lead to a pair of Barlow #16 winches located on the port and starboard cockpit coamings. In lieu of the standard #16s, our review boat was fitted with the optional Barlow #19 single-speed self-tailing winches. The mainsail is sheeted mid-boom and fastened to a cabintop traveler.

## Under way

This boat is quite user-friendly. With all lines led aft to the cockpit, raising, trimming, and reefing the sails is easily managed by a single sailor or a small crew. The O'Day 272 is a coastal cruiser, rather than a bluewater boat. It is perfectly at home in fairly sheltered waters. Its light-air performance is very good and, as the wind increases, the boat begins to sparkle.

However, weather helm becomes a concern at around 15 knots. Take a tuck in the main and maybe a couple of wraps on the genoa so the boat will sail on its feet. The O'Day 272 is responsive to its helm and displays respectable performance on all points of sail although it is perhaps not as close-winded as one might like. The shallow wing keel is probably the culprit here.

Being mainly a family boat, the O'Day 272 is not raced much. No fleet is larger than two, so the established PHRF ratings may not be that accurate for this boat. Most of the O'Day 272s rate around 228 seconds per mile. (Remember that this means 228 seconds per mile longer to complete a mile based on a specific reference point. For more on the PHRF rating system, see the July 2006 issue.) This 228 is slower than the older O'Day 27 at 204. For comparison, a Catalina 27 inboard also rates 204 and a newer Catalina 270 comes in at 201.

The typical O'Day 272 was not equipped with an inboard auxiliary engine, but rather fitted with an adjustable outboard motor bracket. The optional diesel engine was standard equipment on the LE version. Depending upon the year of production, one of two diesel engines was available: a 9-hp Yanmar or a 10-hp Westerbeke. Our review boat was fitted with the 2-cylinder, freshwater-cooled Westerbeke W102 turning a 1-inch shaft and 2-bladed propeller. Fuel is delivered from a 12-gallon aluminum tank that's situated behind the engine on the boat's centerline. Access to the engine for routine maintenance is good; simply remove the companionway ladder and the front panel of the engine enclosure. For greater access, the port and aft sides of the engine enclosure must be unscrewed. Access to the shaft and stuffing box is beneath the quarter berth.

## Things to check out

As with any older boat, check the decks for delamination caused by a balsa core saturated with water. Pay keen attention around fittings. Delam-



## O'Day 272

**Designer:** C. Raymond Hunt Associates  
**LOA:** 26 feet 11 inches  
**LWL:** 22 feet 11 inches  
**Beam:** 9 feet 0 inches  
**Draft:** 2 feet 11 inches  
**Ballast:** 1,870 pounds  
**Displacement:** 4,870 pounds  
**Displ./LWL ratio:** 181  
**Sail area:** 298 square feet  
**SA/Displ. ratio:** 16.6



**A diesel auxiliary engine was optional in the 272 and standard on the 272 LE. Our test boat has a 10-hp Westerbeke, easily accessed through the galley cabinetry.**


inated areas sound dull and hollow when struck with a plastic hammer or the handle of a screwdriver.

Mast compression is another potential problem. Look for signs of cracking, bending, or movement of the supporting forward bulkhead. Also look for signs of water damage in the bulkheads where the chainplates are through-bolted.

While below, examine the hull and overhead fabric liner for telltale water stains. If present, stains can be traced to the source of the leaks.

Extensive cracking and crazing of the gelcoat on the cabintop has been a common complaint. The suspected cause is a thicker-than-necessary gelcoat layer, applied during manufacture. While this is primarily a cosmetic problem, if the cracking is deep, water can penetrate the laminate and result in delamination.

## Conclusion

The O'Day 272 is an inexpensive, nicely equipped and appointed pocket cruiser designed for use in relatively protected waters. The boat is set up to be easily handled by a crew of one or two. Its wing keel enhances the boat's stability and opens up thin-water sailing grounds. Enough stowage, elbowroom, and amenities make a weeklong summer cruise for a family of three or four possible. Prices range from \$10,000 to \$15,000 for a 272 and from \$13,000 to \$18,000 for a 272 LE, depending upon year, condition, and level of equipment. 

## Resources

### O'Day websites

<<http://home.att.net/~oday/>>

<<http://www.odayowners.com>>



# At home



# on highway...

**T**HE PACIFIC SEACRAFT 25 IS A DARK horse. She's not built any longer, except perhaps to special order, and comparatively few people know her, yet she is remarkable in this respect: she is a trailerable sailboat that is fully fit to take on the ocean.

A *Cruising World* article once described this cocky little 25-footer as "the perfect trailerable offshore family cruiser offering seaworthiness, ease of handling, speed, comfort, and years of safe low-maintenance voyaging."

The magazine went on to say that "her traditional double-ended hull is patterned after the famous No Man's Land boats of the 19th century, which were able to carry heavy loads and sail swiftly and safely in all types of weather."

Well, perhaps the author of that glowing account had his or her rose-colored spectacles on that day. Perfect she is not, neither is she swift. But one has to admit that the hyperbole this rugged cruiser generates among her admirers is very infectious. And if she's not actually perfect, it hardly matters because she exudes that magical

*by John Vigor*

combination of allure and seduction that makes perfection quite unnecessary.

Although she's trailerable, she's not the sort of weekend trailersailer you take to the lake for an afternoon's relaxation. This boat weighs more than 2 tons and draws more than 3 feet, so it would take time and planning to launch and retrieve her. On the other hand, you can haul her out, take her home, and leave her in your driveway for the winter. You can see her every day then, and drag the neighbors in to admire her. Like many fine cruising yachts, she shows her workboat heritage in her simple, no-nonsense lines. With a nearly plumb bow and mildly raked stern, she avoids the wasted space in long overhangs and has a long waterline for cargo-carrying capacity. No chrome, no tinsel, no smoke and mirrors, just good solid oak, teak, and bronze. She has the mien of a voyager about her, a restless, purposeful appearance. She wants to go to sea.

## **Basic design**

The Pacific Seacraft Corporation's 25-footer looks as much like a ship's lifeboat as a fishing vessel. She's apple-cheeked and buoyant up forward, and her topsides are probably a little higher than those of a fishing boat but do not detract from her handsome looks. Her rudder hangs on a sharply raked sternpost, like a Folkboat's, and it is a measure of this boat's ruggedness that

*Of his Pacific Seacraft 25, Raven, Ron Chappell writes, "She was my first offshore-capable vessel and will always be my first sailing love. My wife and I lived aboard her for more than a year, sailing her to Alaska and then the Florida Keys and out-islands. She taught us how to be sailors and the way of the sea."*

the rudder's oak cheeks are fastened in place by no fewer than 11 bolts.

The hull is hand-laminated with a high glass-to-resin ratio for extra strength, and the topsides are scored lengthwise to resemble wooden carvel planking. The decks and cabintop are balsa cored for lightness and strength.

The forward face of the cabin trunk is high, boxy and unrelievedly white. It glares at you with a baleful blank stare, daring you to spray graffiti on it. It's probably the least attractive part of this boat but its looks could be improved considerably with the clever use of paint or a strip or two of teak.

There is a gunwale of sorts: it's a couple of inches high at the bow and gradually fades out to nothing at the cockpit. It's topped with a teak caprail almost wide enough to skateboard on.

Her keel is a modified traditional shape, a full-length keel cut away at the forefoot and also (because of the rake of the sternpost) at the heel. Nevertheless, a long straight section remains, flat on the bottom for a good length, so that she will take the ground without falling flat on her face.

The cabintop, although rather high, is not unduly obtrusive, except at its forward edge, as we have mentioned already, and the sidedecks are reasonably wide — getting wider, in fact, as you move forward. The sliding cover over the companionway hatch runs in deep grooves, but lacks a seahood, or turtle, to prevent heavy spray from driving underneath it and entering the cabin.

The self-draining cockpit is snug and solid. It has a very pleasing feeling

of security; and here, as everywhere else on this boat, the metal fittings are substantial hunks of stainless steel or bronze. It has two drains at the forward edge — it could probably do with two more for serious sea work — but it has no bridgedeck, only a 9-inch sill to keep water from flooding below. This means you'd need to keep one or two companionway washboards in place while you were at sea, and you'd have to make sure they were fixed in place with barrel bolts or some such arrangement.

The whole of the cockpit floor is one big hatch cover with downturned flanges that fit over a sill with upturned edges. If you undo 25 fat screws, you can lift it out and gain splendid access to the engine and the stuffing box, but it is a large area to seal satisfactorily,







***As a trailerable boat, the PS 25 has a deck-stepped mast. A tabernacle allows the spar to be dropped and raised quickly.***

Right up forward in the fo'c's'le there's a pretty teak door you should open with caution. It allows access to the chain locker. If the chain is piled up high, it will spill out all over you as soon as you slide back the barrel bolt.

Aft of the door is a V-berth in the form of an isosceles triangle. If you and your partner have sharply tapered hips, legs, and feet, it will fit you fine. Otherwise it's best left to kids. The hull up here is covered with a glued-on fabric that the kids will probably pull off. There is a deep storage locker under the V-berth.

Also in the forecabin are a head, to port, and a half-length hanging cupboard with a shelf on top, to starboard. A curtain on a swinging arm separates the forecabin from the main saloon.

Probably the most prominent feature of the saloon is the portside dinette, an arrangement of two thwartship seats with a raised table in between. The forward seat accommodates two people side by side, the aft seat just one. The outer edge of the table is tapered to fit neatly between them. The table can be lowered to turn the seats into a double berth, which, although it, too, is tapered, offers more foot room than does the V-berth.

To starboard, convenient to the double seat, is a galley of generous size with a two-burner alcohol stove, a sink, and neat teak racks for dishes, mugs, and cutlery. There is stowage for provisions beneath the stove and in an enormous louvered locker under the double seat.

and if it isn't watertight it will admit large portions of the ocean when a wave fills the cockpit.

The standard engine is an 8-horsepower Yanmar diesel that fits into the space under the cockpit as a finger fits in a glove. Access from the cabin is minimal; if you remove the companionway step you can peer at the engine hopefully and wipe its little face, but that's about all. If you're desperate enough, you can undo four screws and remove a panel adjacent to the starboard quarterberth. Then you can get to the engine, or at least to one side of it, either by leaning around the corner awkwardly or by lying full-length on your side in the quarterberth.

### **Accommodations**

It's surprising, given the height of the cabintop, that there isn't more headroom down below, but it's just as well that the impulse to make the cabintop even taller was resisted, for that would surely have turned her into a duckling so ugly not even her mother could have loved her. As it is, the headroom is about 5 feet, which is of no consequence when you're at sea and which you can endure with good grace in port if you are a person of even temper and likeable nature. There are no overhead beams to hit your head on — it's covered with a zippered headliner.

***It is said that Henry Mohrschladt, the founder of Pacific Seacraft, took special interest in this boat and showered her with amenities. Ron notes that he "took up where Henry left off, putting more than 5,000 hours and many thousands of dollars more into her."***



Aft of the galley is a snug quarterberth, bringing the total number of berths to five. That's three too many for a dedicated cruising boat of this size, but fine for family vacation cruising or short coastal hops.

The joinerwork is first-class, as is only to be expected from this manufacturer, and the fittings are substantial. Six solid bronze portlights, all opening, and an overhead hatch bring light and plenty of ventilation to both cabins. The cabin sole is oak parquet on a plywood backing.

### The rig

The Pacific Seacraft 25 is a masthead cutter or sloop with a sail area of 250 square feet. Her bowsprit is quite short, and the staysail stay comes down to the stemhead, so there is not a lot of breathing room for the jib in the cutter version. Nevertheless, since she badly needs the extra area of a large genoa jib to keep her moving in light weather, it must breathe as best it can.

The spars are painted aluminum, and the mainsail is equipped with slab reefing. The mast, which has a single spreader and fore-and-aft lower shrouds, is stepped on deck in a tabernacle that allows the spar to be dropped and raised quickly. A substantial wooden compression post attached to a half bulkhead transfers the downward thrust of the rig to the keel.

The main boom is fairly short, so no boomkin is needed, just a split backstay, bowsed down to the quarters, to give the tiller swinging room. The shroud chainplates are placed on the outside of the hull and secured by four bolts each. The mainsheet runs through quarter blocks on either side of the tiller and is easily accessible to the person at the helm. Tracks for sliding foresail sheet blocks are screwed to the caprail on either side of the cockpit.

### Performance

The fact that the PS 25 has earned a racing handicap rating must prove something, even if her PHRF number is 312, but no tactful person mentions speed and PS 25 in the same breath. Luckily, there are other facets to performance, and it is in these that she shines. Her buoyant ends will keep her dry, and her long keel will make her track straight and true. She'll heave to well and run before big seas in safety with just a windvane steering her.

Her little Yanmar produces more than 3 horsepower per ton of displacement, so she will reach her hull speed of 6 knots with ease in calm weather, although she might struggle just a little against a strong wind and heavy seas. It is important to fit the correct propeller — one that will allow the engine to reach top revolutions (and therefore produce full power) in heavy going. Yes, the PS 25 performs well, no doubt about it. She's just not known for speed.

### Known weaknesses

- Check the cockpit floor for leaks.
- Check the main sliding hatch cover for leaks from driving spray, and fit a top cover if necessary.
- Install fittings that allow the two lower dropboards to be securely fastened in place at sea.

*Inside Raven, Ron and Terrel painted all enclosed spaces, oiled the teak, stripped doors and hatches, and replaced the cushions.*







### **Owner's opinion**

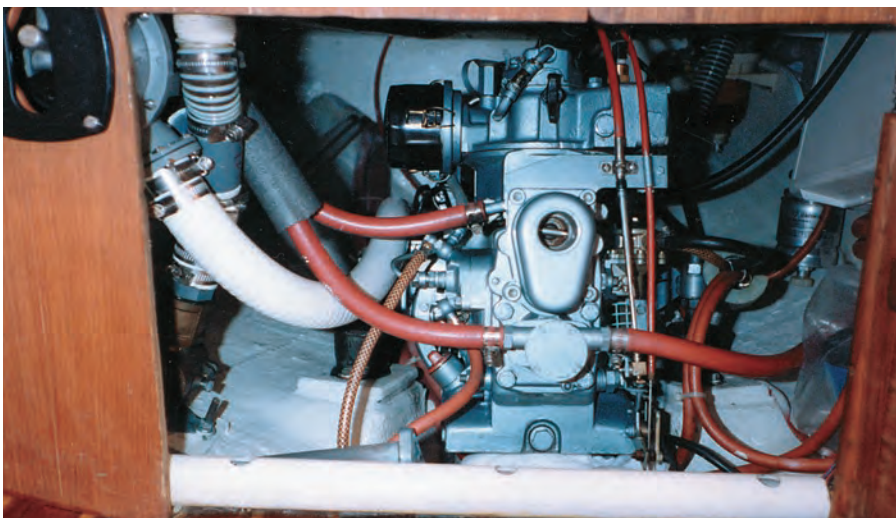
Steve Way, of Tacoma, Washington, owned a Pacific Seacraft 25 for nearly two years. He sailed her many hundreds of miles all over Puget Sound and the Canadian Gulf Islands and completed two circumnavigations of Vancouver Island in her.

“She was a great little boat,” he said. “She was fun to sail. I sailed with kids, and they could handle her easily. I would take a PS 25 across an ocean without hesitation.”

There's weight behind those words. Between 1993 and 1997, Way circumnavigated the world in a boat not much bigger than the PS 25. She was a Laurent Giles-designed bilge-keeler, a Westerly 26 named *Lookfar*.

His PS 25 was rigged as a sloop and had no bowsprit. “She was initially tender, he recalls, “but after heeling a little, she stiffened up. She wasn't a fast boat, but she went well on a reach.” He carried a cruising spinnaker and found it an asset in light weather.

She behaved impeccably in heavy weather during one of Way's cruises around rugged Vancouver Island. “We were on the West Coast, which is wide open to the North Pacific, and it started to blow out of the north. The swells built up, too, and eventually we were running under storm jib only. She handled the swells beautifully with no tendency to broach. I don't know what the windspeed was, but a large powerboat came into port after we did and reported winds of 45 knots.”



*Raven (shown above) is launched in Port Townsend for her return to Alaska. She was outfitted with a BMW 7-hp diesel (shown at left) instead of the 8-hp Yanmar which was standard in the Pacific Seacraft 25. The whole cockpit floor can be removed to provide access to the auxiliary engine. Access from the cabin is minimal.*


What about the lack of headroom?  
“It was a non-factor. It never bothered me.”

Way has owned several boats since then, but he still recalls that his PS 25 was well finished and very strong. “She also had a sweet little single-cylinder Yanmar engine that you could start by hand. It gave her full hull speed.”

The one piece of advice he has for anyone intending to go to sea in a PS 25 is this: “Keep the two lower dropboards in place all the time. Secure them well.”

## Conclusion

You should be able to buy a used PS 25 for between \$15,000 and \$20,000 depending on her condition and upgrades. That makes her very reasonably priced for an ocean-going boat. Her tough construction makes her cheap to maintain, and the fact that you can pull her out on a trailer any time you want means you’ll save on boatyard bills. If you’re short of time, the trailer will also enable you to spend sailing vacations in exotic spots you’d never have time to reach ordinarily.

The PS 25 is a sweet-natured little boat and a good singlehander. It’s almost certain she’d still be in production if she had the standing headroom that modern sailors have become used to. Meanwhile, if you don’t mind doing the PS 25 crouch now and then, she’s a bargain waiting to be snapped up. 



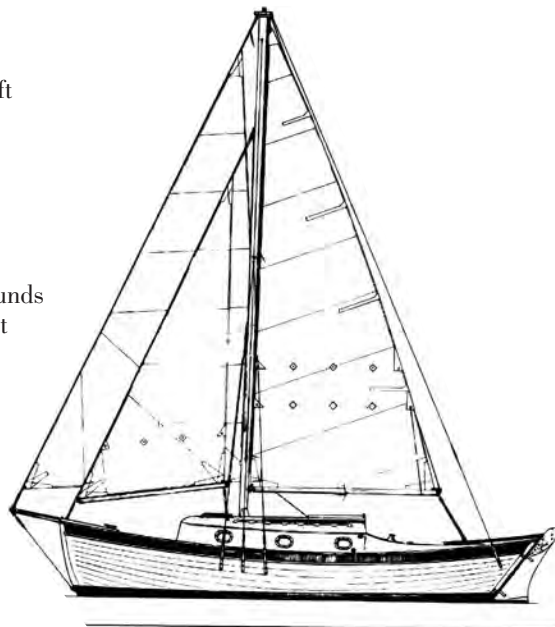
*John Vigor is a freelance journalist based in Oak Harbor, Wash. He has raced, cruised, and written about boats for more than 30 years. He’s the author of two new*

*books, The Seaworthy Offshore Sailboat: A Guide to Essential Features, Gear and Handling (International Marine), and Twenty Small Sailboats to Take You Anywhere (Paradise Cay), which is the source of this and other reviews in this series. He also wrote Danger, Dolphins and Ginger Beer (Simon and Schuster), a sailing adventure novel for 8- to 12-year-olds; The Practical Mariner’s Book of Knowledge (International Marine); and The Sailors’ Assistant (International Marine).*

## In short

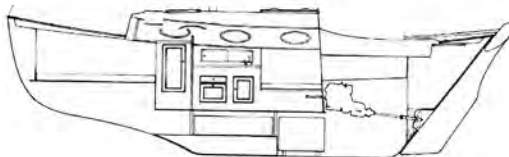
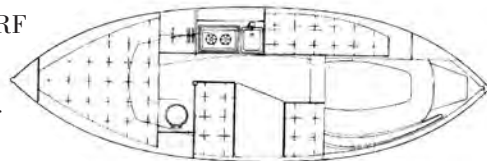
### Pacific Seacraft 25

**Designer:** Pacific Seacraft Corporation, 1979  
**LOA:** 26 feet 3 inches  
**LOD:** 24 feet 6 inches  
**LWL:** 21 feet 0 inches  
**Beam:** 8 feet 0 inches  
**Draft:** 3 feet 3 inches  
**Displacement:** 4,750 pounds  
**Sail area:** 250 square feet  
**Ballast:** 1,750 pounds  
**Spars:** Aluminum  
**Auxiliary:** Yanmar 8-hp diesel  
**Designed as:** Trailerable pocket offshore cruiser



## In comparison

- **Safety-at-sea factor:** 6 (Rated out of 10, with 10 being the safest.)
- **Speed rating:** With a PHRF rating of 312, speed is not this boat’s best asset. By way of comparison, another well-known 25-footer, the International Folkboat, rates 234, which means she covers a distance of one nautical mile 78 seconds faster than the PS 25, on average, around a race course.
- **Ocean comfort level:** One or two adults.



## Resources for Pacific Seacraft Sailors

### Pacific Seacraft 25 Contact

Jim Swindell  
2951 Marina Bay Drive, #130  
League City, TX 77573  
jswindell@usa.net

### Pacific Seacraft Email Discussion List

<http://www.sailnet.com/list/pacificseacraft/index.htm>

### Pacific Seacraft Owners’ Association (Northwest)

360-299-2526  
chartercw@seacraft.com

### Pacific Seacraft Sea Talk Newsletter

Gary Kreis  
8721 172nd Street East  
Puyallup, WA 98375  
253-840-6916  
passages20@aol.com  
Published four times a year for members of the Pacific Northwest Pacific Seacraft Association.





# Pacific Seacraft 25

*A trailerable deep-sea cruiser  
with an impeccable pedigree*



by Ron Chappell



WHEN I LEAF THROUGH MY PICTURE album, I occasionally chance upon a photo that, even after all these years, takes my breath away. It's faded nearly to sepia and peppered with saltwater spots, but I see the scene as clearly as I did on that misty autumn morning on the Seattle docks when I clicked the shutter. I see the rusty hulk of the coastal freighter, *Taku Maru*, 10 days out of Juneau, her cargo crane swinging slowly out over the pier. I see a boat, suspended in the mist, by which I still unconsciously judge all small cruisers: a double-ender of exquisite proportion, her gleaming black hull and crowned house set off by salty teak and bronze fittings. The Pacific Seacraft 25.

In the end, the PS25's only lasting claim to fame may be that she was the "original" Pacific Seacraft sailboat. She was conceived by Henry Mohrschladt, creator and president of the fledgling company, and styled after the well-known no man's land workboats of the late 1800s. These workboats were equally praised by lobstermen and cod fishermen working the Outer Banks in heavy seas and quarrelsome weather.

The little PS25 that these workboats inspired was destined to be the forebear of a respected line of offshore

**Sea Hag, Doug Hewins' Pacific Seacraft 25, trips the light fantastic in Sarasota, on facing page and on the cover. Sea Hag's deck, at right. A comparison of her deck with that of *Raven*, above, gives an example of the standard boat as delivered and the more expensive version with every available option, including teak seahoods, decks, and cockpit grates...even a private-cabin option with a wonderfully crafted door.**

cruisers. It is in this small cruiser that we find the roots of the legendary Pacific Seacraft commitment to excellence, a quality leading *Fortune* magazine, in later years, to name them "One of America's 100 best products" and stating quite simply, "Pacific Seacraft builds the finest cruising sail-

boats of their size in the world."

My wife and I spent several years, including a year as liveaboards, putting thousands of miles under the keel of a 25. Though distanced now by time, her virtues and frailties are yet fresh in my mind. Was she then the ideal small voyaging boat? In the cold hard light of day, I must admit that she was not. Nor is any other boat her size that I am acquainted with. The juxtaposition of small boats on large oceans for long periods of time is fraught with tradeoffs.

#### Not her forte

Contrary to some accounts, she was not a quick boat...certainly not in

today's terms. But that was not what she was about. Neither was she fond of slogging to weather unless driven to it, a fault I laid to her shoal draft and cut-away forefoot. Yet these were the very items I praised when rock-strewn waters called for nimble handling or shallow coves offered a quiet anchorage. Held close to the wind in rough water, she could be somewhat wet, a fault common to her design type and one easily alleviated with a dodger and proper weathercloths.

She was designed as an ocean-capable pocket cruiser, one that "could be transported by trailer." She

*"Our boat took half a day to launch and commission for 'offshore readiness.' That said, we towed her more than 14,000 miles and splashed her down in both oceans time after time."*

was pushing the envelope as a viable trailerable boat: one that could be dunked in a nearby lake on the weekends. At nearly 7,000 pounds with trailer, it took a full-size, three-quarter-ton pickup to handle the job. Our boat took half a day to launch and commission for "offshore readi-

ness." That said, we towed her more than 14,000 miles and splashed her down in both oceans time after time. We covered cruising grounds so varied it might have taken her many years to travel to them on her own bottom. Our longest continuous voyage was from Washington to the Gulf of Alaska







**At left, Ron Chappell watches intently as his PS25, *Raven*, is transferred from her trailer.**

and, with the exploring along the way, it took nearly all of one summer, a memorable summer indeed.

The bulk of the PS25 run was manufactured from 1975 through 1980 with our own *Raven*, hull #257, being the last. Early offerings could appear quite plain: sloop rigged and without the signature Pacific Seacraft bowsprit. Even then, however, they featured the heavy layup and furniture-quality joinery that came to epitomize the breed. Bronze opening ports and heavy bronze deck fittings were standard, as were inboard diesels, Yanmars usually.

The BMW D7 was an option, a wonderfully tough and smooth running little engine with but one glaring flaw: its charging system consisted of an internal flywheel-type magneto that required pulling the engine and breaking apart the transmission case to effect replacement. I'll not soon forget wrestling it out and dismantling it on the dock in Ketchikan. That it was a one-person job was in its favor, as the distributor assured me it was not an uncommon chore. There was room in the engine compartment for a two-cylinder engine, of perhaps 12 horsepower, and in the tides and currents of the Pacific Northwest I often thought it would have been an advantage.

#### **Four swing-keelers**

There are a few owner-finished boats out there and only recently we learned of a swing-keel model as well. It's said that only four were built. Other options included various hull colors, teak seahoods for teak hatches, teak decks, cockpit grates, and cutter rigs (most later models had them) with

club-footed staysails. There was even a private-cabin option with a full forward bulkhead and a wonderfully crafted door.

Her massive stern-hung rudder and stout tiller were of a caliber to make a Viking proud; so massive, in fact, that we elected to unship the rudder for trailering, to avoid stress on the gud-

*“The hull-to-deck joint was built to a standard seldom attained at the time . . . When we were in desperate circumstances, it made my heart grow big just to think of it.”*

geons. It was all I could do to raise it up in place when re-commissioning. It was supported at the lower end by a heavy bronze gudgeon attached near the bottom of the keel, with just enough of a slot left to catch an occasional crab pot, though it was easily pushed off with a boathook.

We judged the cockpit to be of nearly perfect size and shape for a seagoing boat, with wonderfully rounded corners for lounging, a roomy stern lazarette, and spacious port-side locker. The footwell was not overly deep and proved to be adequately drained. Engine controls fell close to hand, and I thought the kill switch beside the levers a nice touch.

A bilge-pump panel, mounted on the opposite side of the cockpit, was easily operated while at the tiller. The floor of the cockpit was removable if one cared to undo the umpteen bolts securing it, though if it was not replaced carefully leaks could ensue. Later models did not seem to have that problem, and engine access in this manner could be a godsend in extreme circumstances. All normal service could be performed after removal of the companionway steps. A removable side panel afforded further room to work.

#### **Low bridge deck**

The bridge deck on the boat is a tad low at 9 inches. The cure was to keep at least one of the hatchboards in place when under way (two in rough weather) and to lock them in place, of course. In our early exuberance, we personally examined over a dozen PS25s from one coast to the other and conducted sea trials on a number of them. We never encountered one with water intrusion of the core. Factors in this were her nicely crowned cabintop and deck as well as her sturdy, well-bedded fittings. Nor did blistering of the hull seem to be a problem in any but a few minor cases. Roller furling was rare in those days and considered to be a frou-frou addition not to be trusted. I'm sure many are in place today. A modern 135 roller genny would have made life easier by a bunch.

The boat is heavily rigged with oversized chainplates mounted to the outside of the hull, an arrangement I have always admired. All fittings are well backed by stainless plates and nearly impervious to leaks. The hull-to-deck joint was built to a standard seldom attained at the time: mating flanges, bedded in 3M 5200, through-bolted every 6 inches, then glassed on the inside. When we were in desperate circumstances, it made my heart grow big just to think of it. A staysail stay forward and a stout stainless-steel-wire topping lift aft provided some redundancy for the cutter rig and additional peace of mind.

Her keel was wide and flat-bottomed. I recall the time we let *Raven* dry out on a hard mudflat with only the

dinghy oars and whisker poles wedged under her rubrails for support. She sat as solid as a hen on a nest while we did a touch-up of the bottom paint. One of her selling points was the ballast, a 1,750-pound piece of solid-cast, encapsulated lead whose compact mass not only gave superior stability but also left usable space in the bilges the length of the cabin sole.

The deep narrow fuel tank (approximately 20 gallons) was also in the bilge, just forward of the engine compartment, a proper place for a fuel tank in my opinion. Unfortunately, Pacific Seacraft for years insisted on aluminum tanks, and there, deep in the bilge, despite having runners under it, the tank would invariably develop saltwater corrosion and pinhole leaks. This typically occurred at six to eight years, and the job of replacing these tanks became legend in the industry.

### Common interior

The interior of the boat is well documented and was a common arrangement of the day, though better finished than most. Her headroom of 5 feet 2 inches was always a non-issue for the mate at 5 foot 1 inch. As for me, I have often said that on a small boat one is only below to eat, sleep, or read a book...none of which I care to do standing up.

All bulkheads and furniture were stoutly bonded to the hull or deck for superior hull strength, stiffness, and accessibility. It was a labor-intensive method seldom seen in today's world of fiberglass interior pans. Her port-side dinette was well thought out and while now considered old-fashioned, we found it to be cozy and livable. It

*"I have often said that on a small boat one is only below to eat, sleep, or read a book...none of which I care to do standing up."*

did convert to a double berth should the need arise. The 14-gallon poly water tank was under the longer of the dinette seats and the so-called icebox under the shorter. To delve into the cooler, one found it necessary to hold

***Raven's interior, below, is a masterpiece of cozy comfort.***



up the cushion with one's head while extracting the required viands. When sailing northern waters, we kept our perishables in the bilges.

The starboard quarterberth was described as a sea berth but, as it shared that side with the galley, most of the legroom was under the cockpit sole. It was a bit like getting into a coffin — not for the claustrophobic. The galley itself was of useable size and well laid out with freshwater and seawater hand pumps. It was available with pressure kerosene or alcohol stove, neither of which I can recommend.

The boat's headliner was identical to today's most expensive Pacific Seacrafts and has probably sold more boats for them than any other interior feature. Off-white, of heavy vinyl, impeccably installed with hidden zip-pers for access to overhead wiring and fittings, it became yet another Pacific Seacraft signature, seldom equaled in the industry. The forward cabin was well planned, with a starboard-side hanging locker and a port-side head. The V-berth proved suitable for those of average stature. We found it to be comfortable, even over a long period of time. While her interior accommodations were in keeping with her size, the addition of a dodger and rain fly could open up the interior of this boat considerably, and I would consider them required equipment for extended cruising.

### Handled it with aplomb

Having sailed this boat for extended periods in severe weather and sea conditions (not intentionally I must confess), I am happy to report she handled it all with aplomb. Her pointy







little stern would indeed rise to slice a following sea with buoyancy to spare. She had a fairly light helm and would track like the proverbial train when properly balanced, this in spite of her cutaway forefoot. Light air *did* require every scrap of sail, but in anything over 8 knots she moved surprisingly well. It was not unusual to attain hull speed when reaching in 12 to 14 knots of wind. Being conservative, we would normally tuck in a reef around 16 knots. Initially a bit tender, she stiffened nicely at 10 degrees of heel.

Near to my heart was her ability to lie hove to. With a reefed staysail and

## Pacific Seacraft 25

**Designer:** Henry Mohrschladt  
**LOA:** 26 feet 3 inches  
**LWL:** 21 feet 0 inches  
**Beam:** 8 feet 0 inches  
**Draft:** 3 feet 3 inches  
**Displacement:** 4,750 pounds  
**Sail area:** 250 square feet  
**Ballast:** 1,750 pounds

triple-reefed main, she would present her shoulder to the sea and ride the waves like a duck.

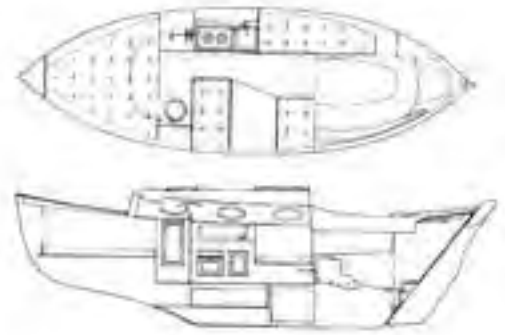
John Vigor, in his excellent book, *Twenty Small Sailboats to Take You Anywhere*, captured the essence of the PS25 when he called her “sweet natured,” a term I had not previously thought to apply to a boat, but one that fits the 25 so perfectly that it should have been the headline for her brochure. The boat’s willingness and ease of handling saved our bacon on several occasions in our early days. For those enraptured with the traditional single-handed sailing vessel, she was well suited to the dream.

Brand new in 1980, the *Raven*, with every conceivable option, sold for a bit over \$30,000. A more standard version was nearer to \$23,000, up some \$3,000 over earlier years. Today, a good used example might be had anywhere from \$16,000 to \$20,000 depending on upgrades and condition. Quite a reasonable price for a boat that can “take you anywhere.”

The demise of the PS25 was preordained with the introduction of the Bruce Bingham-drawn Flicka to the Pacific Seacraft line. This 20 footer’s standing headroom was only part of her appeal; her masterful use of space and more modern “open concept” interior proved to be the telling factor. I always thought the 25 to be the more elegant and esthetically pleasing of the two. In any case, the Flicka proved a fine addition to the line and worthy to assume the crown.

Some years ago I was informed by the factory that the molds for the little PS25 had been shipped to Japan. Their ultimate fate remains unknown. ⚓

**Sea Hag with Doug Hewins at the tiller.**



## Another viewpoint

**D**OUG HEWINS AND HIS BROTHER, Chuck, took some of the color slides for this article. Most of his 60,000 miles at sea were aboard frigates (the non-sailing variety) of both the U.S. Navy and the British Royal Navy. Since leaving the service he has confined his sea trips to small sailing cruisers. His current Pacific Seacraft 25, *Sea Hag*, and her renovation keeps him busy in Sarasota, Florida. Doug is a photographer and contributor to various *National Geographic* publications.

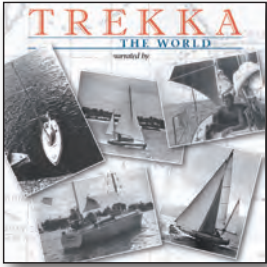
In his impressions of the PS25 he notes: “I’ve been pleasantly surprised with her ability to reach near hull speed in winds of 10 to 15 knots. With a fully deployed roller-furling headsail and her small, easily handled main, she balances well enough for me to move to the foredeck when required. Her Ratcliffe Marine Design self-steering system works well, even in the light winds I’ve been exposed to so far. She’s a bit tender initially but stiffens dramatically as she heels. I think she sails predictably with either the main or headsail alone, although she doesn’t earn many kudos for her pointing abilities under one sail.

“At this point, I would have few reservations about sailing *Sea Hag* on six of the proverbial seven seas. Her deck-stepped mast would keep me out of that seventh sea; otherwise I think she’d relish the bluewater environment. Best of all, I could trailer her to a suitable put-in point if I had a trailer... I’m working on that.” ⚓



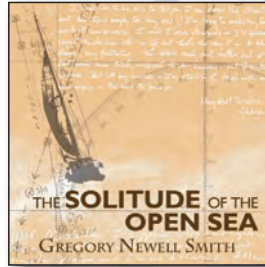


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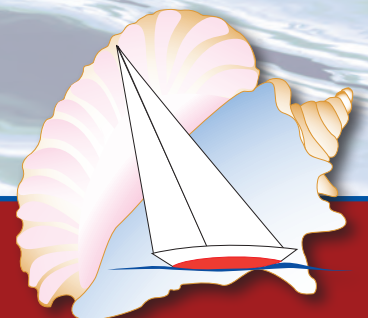
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It's often said that numbers don't lie. Using that adage as a benchmark, the Pearson 26, with more than 700 hulls produced, qualifies as a very successful design. It was therefore no surprise to find three Pearson 26s at the Grand Lake Sailing Club in Oklahoma as Commodore Tom White welcomed us to the club's facilities on the beautiful Grand Lake O' the Cherokees. The lake offers 18 miles of good sailing between the club's marina and the Pensacola Dam at its western end and even more sailing to the east.

Bill Snow, Marshall Orcutt, and Mike McCall own the three Pearson 26s at the club. Unfortunately, none of the owners could be present when the stars and the weather aligned during our visit to provide suitable conditions for the test sail. This was not a problem, however, because GLSC member Roy Goding stepped in to sail Bill Snow's Pearson 26, *Pied Piper*, with the able assistance of club caretaker Tim Chambers. Marshall Orcutt's *Alice O* was made available for interior photography. The club also provided its race committee boat for our use during the photography session.

### Design and history

Cousins Clint and Everett Pearson began their business in a small way, at first building dinghies in a garage and eventually forming Pearson Yachts in 1956. They continued building smaller boats, but in 1959 they joined the first wave of fiberglass cruising-boat production when they introduced the 28-foot 6-inch Triton, a Carl Alberg design. Several production cruising boats followed the Triton.

Change came quickly to Pearson Yachts during the 1960s when it was sold to Grumman Allied Aircraft Corporation. In 1964, Bill Shaw, a designer with several years of experience at Sparkman & Stephens, joined the company. In the same year, Clint Pearson left to form Bristol Yachts and when Everett Pearson also parted ways with Grumman two years later, Bill took over the management reins as well.

In 1970, Pearson Yachts introduced Bill's Pearson 26. Between 1970 and

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The Pearson 26, *Pied Piper*, owned by Bill Snow, heels to a fine sailing breeze on Oklahoma's Grand Lake O' the Cherokees.

# Pearson 26



*A perky pocket cruiser  
built in great numbers*

by Tom Wells

1982, 1,774 hulls were sold, making it Pearson's most-built model, eclipsing even the popular Pearson 30.

In 1975, Pearson also introduced the Weekender, later called the One Design. It was based on the Pearson 26 but with a longer cockpit and a straight profile in the shortened cabin trunk. More than 300 of these boats were built between 1975 and 1983.

Bill continued designing the bulk of the Pearson offerings through the 1980s and in 1986 he and other investors bought the company from Grumman. The company went into bankruptcy in the early 1990s. Bill Shaw died in 2006.

### Construction details

The Pearson 26 hull is a sturdy layup of solid fiberglass. The sweptback cast-iron fin keel is joined to the hull with eight bolts and the draft is a modest 4 feet.

The rudder tube is located at the rear of the cockpit sole, just forward of the outboard-motor well. Some boats have had leaks here and their owners have had to repair saturated balsa core. The deep scimitar-shaped rudder provides ample clearance to allow a center-mounted outboard, rather than the offset outboard configuration found on many other small cruisers. Owners have reported rudder-stock problems, and here the Pearson 26 is a bit unusual. Pearson built a solid fiberglass rudder over an aluminum stock riding in a plastic bushing, and wear on the stock is common.

This could be dangerous in a seaway if a worn stock allowed enough movement to fatigue the metal and cause failure and loss of the rudder. Anyone



The centerline motor well makes it easy to operate and turn the outboard, including kicking it up. The offset companionway goes with the dinette arrangement in the interior.

considering a Pearson 26 should be sure to check the rudder stock for wear and also to check the cockpit sole for water intrusion near the rudder tube.

The deck is balsa-cored fiberglass with plywood core in load areas. The hull and deck were joined by through-bolting outward turning flanges on both parts. The joint was finished by covering the flanges and bolts with a sturdy vinyl rubrail and by applying fiberglass mat and resin over the inside of the joint. This produced a relatively trouble-free joint. The outer edge of the deck has a small raised toerail with a short, through-bolted aluminum genoa track.

The interior incorporates a fiberglass hull liner, a fiberglass deck liner, and plywood bulkheads. The liner is cored

in areas of the sole where heavy loads are expected. The liner was tabbed to the hull and the bulkheads bolted to the hull liner. After the hull and deck were joined, the bulkheads were fastened to the deck liner. The inboard end of the port bulkhead attaches to a compression post that transmits loads from the deck-stepped mast.

### The rig

The mast is an aluminum extrusion supported by a single-spreader rig. The original halyards were external and no mast-mounted halyard winches were fitted as standard equipment. Many owners have run the halyards to the cockpit where they use a coachroof winch for halyard tensioning.



The roomy cockpit, at left, comfortably seats four. Seat lockers and coaming cubbies provide plenty of stowage. The foredeck, at right, has few obstructions while providing the basic necessary hardware: chocks, cleats, and running lights.





The dinette seats two comfortably, at left, but two more can be seated across the aisle on the starboard settee. A small sink above the aft seat is served by a hand pump. There's space in the head for a marine toilet, but no sink, at right. Opposite is a hanging locker. A sliding panel closes off the V-berth. The narrowing of the V-berth forward constricts foot space, below. No access to the forepeak is provided from the deck.

The upper shrouds and single lower shrouds attach to chainplates mounted inboard of the toerail. The rig has a split backstay to clear the centered outboard motor and this allows the easy use of a backstay tension adjuster.

The traveler spans the forward end of the outboard motor well and the mainsheet runs to the aft end of the aluminum boom.

### Deck details

For the Pearson 26, Bill Shaw retained the characteristic stepped cabin-trunk profile of the earlier Alberg-designed Pearson models. The mast step is located at the step in the deck, so crew working at the mast need to be mindful of their footing. There are short grabrails on the raised after section of the coach-roof. The forward hatch, positioned over the V-berth, is made of fiberglass with the gelcoat omitted from the center portion to let light into the cabin.

Crew must work around the shrouds when going forward because the chainplates are in the center of the narrow sidedecks. Even so, access is still better than on some boats of comparable size.

The foredeck is fairly clean. With no hawsepipe or other means to stow an anchor rode belowdecks, an owner wanting to carry and mount a bow anchor must coil and secure the rode on deck. The only items of hardware on the foredeck are chocks to port and starboard, cleats to port and starboard, and a center cleat for belaying the rode.

A stainless-steel bow pulpit and single lifelines, which drop to coaming level at the stern, provide some security. A stern pulpit was optional, but most boats were not equipped with one.



The cockpit seats are 6 feet 6 inches long, providing enough space for crew to stretch out. Sail-locker hatches in both of the seats provide access to a large space below. In early boats, the fuel tank was stored in the sail locker area and both hatches were identical in length. In 1973, Pearson modified the cockpit design to add a dedicated fuel-tank cubby beneath the aft end of the starboard seat. When this was done, the starboard sail-locker hatch was shortened slightly. At the same time, the motor well was enlarged to accommodate larger outboards.

The cockpit well averages approximately 30 inches in width and the tiller extends for most of its length. Crew positioning is important to avoid interference with the helmsman.

Coaming cubbies on both sides provide stowage for winch handles and other items. Lewmar #8 sheet winches mounted on the coamings were standard equipment, though many owners have upgraded to self-tailing winches.

The companionway is offset to starboard because the aisle below is off-center to accommodate the port-side

dinette. A low sill at the companionway is not high enough to qualify as a bridge deck. When the boat is in any kind of sea, the lower washboard should be left in place. A track-mounted sliding hatch over the companionway provides access below. There is no sea hood protecting the forward edge of the hatch.

### Accommodations

Although the Pearson 26 does not provide standing headroom for the average sailor, the raised aft portion of the cabin trunk does have more than five feet of clearance. The dinette offers fore-and-aft seating for a couple or four very close friends as long as two of them are seated on the starboard settee. The table can be lowered to form a tight double berth. The settee to starboard also serves as a single berth.

Removable lids under the cushions provide access to stowage space beneath the port seats and the starboard settee. Shelves with fiddles are above the seats port and starboard. Near the end of the production run, acrylic sliding doors were added on some boats.

There is a small sink on a counter platform behind the aft table seat, with more stowage available in the counter. Some flat surface space is available on the counter between the sink and the port side of the cabin trunk, but it is not as convenient as normal counter space. On the two boats at GLSC, a hand pump delivers water to the sink, but some owners have installed pressurized

### Resources

**Pearson Sailboat Owners Association**  
<http://pearson.sailboatowners.com>

systems. A 22-gallon water tank beneath the V-berth provides adequate capacity for weekend cruises. A small two-burner alcohol stove can be set on the small navigation table to starboard of the offset companionway.

The cored-fiberglass liner surface and the bilge boards over the access openings form the cabin sole. Many owners have cut and installed all-weather carpeting to dress up the interior.

Large fixed portlights admit ample light but the only source of ventilation is the open companionway hatch. There are no deck vents.

The head is to port between the saloon and V-berth bulkheads. A door at the saloon and a sliding panel at the V-berth can be closed for privacy. A marine toilet and 12-gallon holding tank were standard, but some boats were sold without these features and use a portable toilet instead. There is no vanity sink. Opposite the head is an ample hanging locker.

The V-berth is 6-feet 3-inches long but it narrows to around 18 inches at the forward end. It's adequate for two, provided one person is quite short. Fiddled shelves along both sides provide stowage for personal items. There is a small forepeak for stowage but no easy way to use it for the anchor rode.

The fiberglass hatch over the V-berth can be opened for ventilation and access. Replacing this hatch with a modern one with a Lexan lens might be a desirable upgrade.

## Under power

Handling the boat under power is different from steering a boat with an inboard engine. The motor can be pivoted as needed in close quarters, but generally it can be left locked in the forward-aft position and the rudder used for steering. The small outboard induces little prop walk in reverse and once the boat has steerageway it can be tiller-steered as needed. A small outboard is quite suitable on an inland lake. A larger outboard would be desirable in coastal areas, but some larger outboard engines, like the 4-stroke 9.9-hp models, might not fit the smaller motor well in pre-1973 boats.

The motor can be tilted to raise the lower unit out of the water to reduce drag, but many owners don't bother unless they are racing.

## Under sail

We set out for our test sail on a clear summer morning with winds around 10 knots and the temperature already in the high 80s. As the forecast was for 106 degrees that afternoon, a morning sail seemed to be the best course of action. We left the dock, raised sail, and Roy Goding gave me the helm.

Sailing the Pearson 26 is easy and instinctive. If you've grown accustomed to wheel steering, the first impression is that the tiller takes up a lot of cockpit space, but the solid feel and rudder feedback quickly bring back the joys of sailing a responsive smaller boat. With end-boom sheeting, the mainsheet and jibsheet can be easily trimmed from the helm position. This would be a relatively easy boat to sail singlehanded, provided self-tailing primary winches are installed.

We sailed in 10 to 12 knots of breeze under full genoa and main, and the boat never felt overpowered. As we were going to windward, minor adjustments to the mainsheet and traveler balanced the helm

nicely with just a few degrees of weather helm, as is desirable. Tacking was a snap, as the boat pivots quickly on her shallow keel and doesn't lose much in the turn. The boat will sail between 35 and 40 degrees to the apparent wind without losing drive. Above that point she felt a bit pinched, but we were able to regain speed by footing off a bit. Newer sails and some sheeting-angle adjustments might allow the boat to point slightly higher. Some amount of leeway can be expected because of the fairly shallow keel, but it isn't too noticeable on a beat.

Sailing on a beam reach provided good speed and, with the sails properly trimmed, a fingertip on the tiller kept the boat on course. There was just a little chop on the lake, but the occasional big wake from a passing power cruiser provided the opportunity to estimate the motion in a seaway. The boat took these wakes cleanly without pounding or much loss of drive.

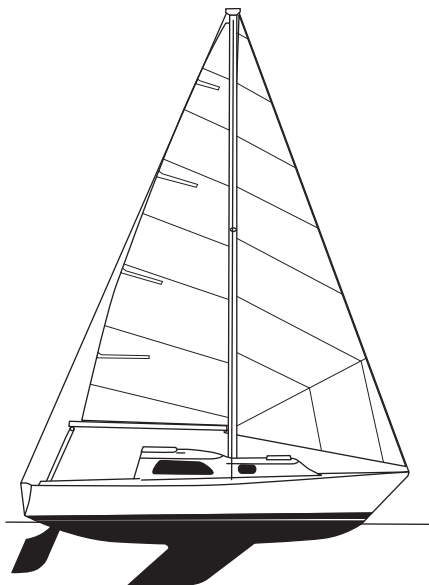
The crisp tiller steering, aft-mounted traveler, and easy access to all sail controls make the Pearson 26 a joy to sail.

Owners still race these boats in many areas, and PHRF ratings nationwide are between 210 and 222. The boat rates about the same as the C&C 25 (213) and the older Hunter 25 (235) outboard models, and is still competitive in local fleet racing.

## Conclusion

The Pearson 26 is a good value as a pocket cruiser, and its accommodations and seaworthiness make it suitable for weekends and short coastal cruising. It's a solid, durable design, and most of the hulls produced are still sailing. In the fall of 2011, at least nine were on the market in the U.S. and Canada. Asking prices ranged from \$8,575 to \$2,690 with an average price of approximately \$5,700, making it a very affordable entry-level small cruiser. Anyone buying a lower-priced boat should anticipate doing some work to address deferred maintenance issues such as saturated deck core and uncorrected rudder problems, but the work may be well worth the effort. *▲*

*Tom Wells is a contributing editor with Good Old Boat. He and his wife, Sandy, own and sail a 1979 Tartan 37, Higher Porpoise. They have been sailing together since the 1970s and look forward to cruising upon retirement.*



### Pearson 26

**Designer:** Bill Shaw  
**LOA:** 26 feet 2 inches  
**LWL:** 21 feet 8 inches  
**Beam:** 8 feet 8 inches  
**Draft:** 4 feet 0 inches  
**Displacement:** 5,400 pounds  
**Ballast:** 2,200 pounds  
**Sail area:** 321 square feet  
**Sail area/displ. ratio:** 16.7  
**Disp./LWL ratio:** 237  
**Ballast/displ. ratio:** .41



**D**ave Gow's Ranger 26, *Bandit*, was built in 1973 and he's owned her since 2006. Over the years, the boat's several skippers have won a lot of races and the plaques are there to prove it, proudly displayed on her main bulkhead. As well as keeping to an active racing schedule, Dave and his wife, Roberta, together with daughters Kathy and Becky, Becky's husband, Josh, and their two small children, take turns forming various crews to cruise Puget Sound and the island groups beyond.

### Design

Gary Mull was an exceptionally prolific, able, and successful designer of outstanding sailboats, including the Santana 22, 27, and 37; the Ranger 22, 23, 26, 29, 32, 33; and the SORC-winning Ranger 37. Gary also designed the Newport 30 and 33; the Kalik 44; the Freedom Independence 28, 30, 36, 42, and 45; the successful Half Ton, *Hotflash*, and the 12 Meter, *USA*. He also designed several 6 Meter match racers, including *Ranger*, raced by Ted Turner. The list continued until Gary's death in 1994 at the age of 55. For an extended article on his life and legacy see "Gary Mull in Retrospect" in the November 2002 issue of *Good Old Boat*.

The Ranger 26 is sometimes confused with another boat of the same name. Our review boat, built in Costa Mesa, California, is sometimes called the California Ranger 26 to distinguish it from the Ray Richards-designed Kent Ranger, built in Kent, Washington. Ray Richards' boat is a more traditional design with a clipper bow and a very shippy sheer.

Gary Mull's Ranger 26 was conceived as the ideal compromise between racer and small family cruiser. Two long portlights along the cabin side light the saloon while a smaller port forward marks the location of the head and hanging locker; they are purposely placed and well proportioned. There is neither too much nor too little freeboard and the proportion of cabintop to foredeck and cockpit coamings seems right. There is nothing about the profile that seems forced or otherwise contrived to achieve headroom or a more modern appearance.

# Ranger 26

*A swift, sweet, and well-mannered all-rounder*

by Richard Smith



*Bandit*, a Ranger 26 owned by Dave Gow, shows off the pleasing proportions of her 40-year-old design.

## “The Ranger 26 is undeniably fast and looks it. In 1970, one of these boats won the North American IOR Half Ton Cup.”

Whereas today underwater appendages are generally vertical, the thinking in the late 1960s and early '70s was to rake them aft, as seen in the Ranger 26's "swept back" keel and rudder. Looking at the Ranger 26 in profile, the canoe body is relatively shallow. The displacement/length ratio, at 254, and the sail area/displacement ratio, at 15.9, are moderate.

The Ranger 26 is undeniably fast and looks it. In 1970, one of these boats won the North American IOR Half Ton Cup.

### Construction

Construction of the Ranger 26 employed technology common in the 1970s. The hull is hand-laid fiberglass with an inward-turning flange along the sheer. The solid edge of the balsacored deck laps the hull flange. Both are topped by an extruded aluminum toerail and mechanically fastened by bolts at 6-inch centers.

The Ranger 26 incorporates an interior fiberglass pan molding that simplifies the construction of furniture. Horizontal surfaces of the pan, such as the settee and forward-cabin berth supports, are reinforced with a plywood core. A padded-vinyl headliner covers the overhead and continues down to cover the cabin sides.

Deck hardware is fastened conspicuously through the headliner and finished off with washers and cap nuts that, however convenient, could result in some scraped heads. A larger concern is the suitability of the washers as backing plates. Dave lost the bow pulpit in a racing accident. The nuts and washers securing the bolts that held down the base fittings tore through the deck, indicating the need for better backing. He replaced the washers with stainless-steel backing plates. It's good practice to reinforce through-bolted hardware with proper backing plates or larger diameter washers. (See "Better Backing Blocks" in the March 2010 issue.)

The 1-ton iron keel is bolted to the hull and requires periodic inspection and maintenance. Recently, all 10 of *Bandit's* ½-inch galvanized bolts were found to be badly corroded and were replaced. At the same time, Dave had the keel sandblasted to bare metal. He filled pits and faired surfaces with an epoxy filler, painted it with coal-tar epoxy, and added a barrier coat before applying antifouling bottom paint. The hull is free of blisters.

### On deck

Sidedecks on the Ranger 26 average about 12 inches wide and hardware

such as chainplates, genoa tracks, and blocks can be obstacles to crew moving forward. Lifeline stanchions are angled outboard, which helps a little, and the aluminum toerail is an advantage in a seaway, but with a sea hood, raised forward hatch, and sundry other protuberances, the deck must be negotiated carefully to avoid tripping or rolling a foot over the various items of running rigging.

Dave stows the anchor in the forepeak with the anchor rode, which is led there through a hinged deck pipe. He carries the anchor on deck when cruising and plans to add a bow roller. A hatch is located just forward of the mast on the cabintop. The non-skid pattern molded into the deck is about average in effectiveness.

A close inspection of the deck moldings revealed a large amount of crazing in the gelcoat, especially at tight radiuses. These cracks are usually more of a cosmetic than structural problem and often result when the builder sprays the gelcoat too thickly. The small stress patterns arise as a result of expansion and contraction with temperature changes. Repairs can be made, but after almost 40 years of hard use, a good old boat is entitled to show a few wrinkles here and there.



The companionway has a low sill for easy ingress and egress, at left, but in rough conditions the bottom weather board should be locked in place. The red lines running along the cabin sides are part of Dave Gow's boom vang/preventer system. The cockpit has high coamings for comfortable backrests, at right. Dave says the 8-hp outboard has always been more than adequate power, even against Puget Sound's notorious currents.





The galley in the Ranger 26 is quite minimal. The small sink is hard against the aft bulkhead on the port side, at left, and the stove is opposite on the starboard side, at right. The starboard settee extends under the stove, and shelves above it provide storage for sundry items.

### The cockpit

Seating along the full length of the large 7-foot 2-inch cockpit makes for smooth crew movement when tacking and jibing and creates a spacious area for dockside socializing and comfortable cruising. The width between the benches seems about right for leg bracing when heeled, but the seats may feel a little low for long-legged crew. Rather than quarter berths, Gary Mull designed generous stowage areas under both cockpit seats. The starboard seat locker is large enough to fit an outboard and one or two 6-gallon gasoline cans. The port-side locker is identical, and the locker covers are secured by lines leading below and forward to jam cleats in the galley.

The outboard motor is mounted in a transom notch, and a low bulkhead forward of it helps keep the cockpit dry.

The traveler is just forward of the engine where it's handy to the helmsman and the mainsheet is out of the way of the crew. A long tiller provides good leverage and helps locate crew weight forward and nearer the boat's center of gravity (weight in the ends of a boat induces hobby horsing). A compass, knotmeter, and depth sounder are located on the after bulkhead. Dave has a GPS chart plotter on a hinged mount in the galley (that he swings out for cockpit viewing) and an Autohelm tiller autopilot.

### The rig

The Ranger 26 is a masthead sloop with an aluminum mast stepped on deck and supported by a headstay, a backstay (with a tensioning bridle), two upper shrouds, and four lowers. A topping lift supports the boom.

In addition to the mainsail, *Bandit* sails with a 130 percent genoa on a Harken furler. Dave plans to replace the primary winches, currently two-speed Barient 21s, with Harken 32 self-tailing two-speed winches. The main and spinnaker halyards are handled by two Lewmar 6 winches.

### Belowdecks

A small bulkhead with an opening separates the forepeak and its anchor rode from the forward cabin V-berth. The berth, which is 6 feet 6 inches long by 6 feet wide at the head (and narrow at the foot, as always with such berths), provides adequate room for a couple. Shelves run the full length along either side. There is considerable storage below the mattress supports and a convenient access drawer pulls out into the adjacent area to the rear



*Bandit's* racing honors, garnered under several owners, adorn the main bulkhead, at left. Forward is the small head compartment and spacious (for this size boat) V-berth. The dinette in the saloon, at right, is well lit by the fixed ports in the cabin trunk and converts to a double berth.

of the berths. This space also houses a portable toilet to port and a storage locker to starboard. A well-placed deck hatch provides light over the berth and the toilet area, and a door in the main bulkhead provides privacy.

Aft of the main bulkhead, on the port side, is a dinette that converts into a small double berth. Stowage areas are located below the benches and behind sliding doors outboard of the table. Opposite to starboard, a settee provides a berth (larger than a single but smaller than a double) with shelves along its length and good stowage below.

The boat has 5 feet of headroom throughout and a generous 3 feet 4 inches of headroom over the seats. The idea is to get below and sit down right away — trying to move around in most 26 footers is hard on the back.

Bulkheads are plywood finished with teak veneer and the trim is solid teak. The plywood sole lifts to reveal the keel bolts. The bilge under the cabin sole is too shallow for a bilge pump but Dave reports that the only water that gets below comes from the little spray she takes aboard when hard pressed — and perhaps a little condensation — which he takes care of with a sponge. A large diaphragm bilge pump removes water from the space below the cockpit.

A two-burner Dickinson propane stove is located to starboard aft of the settee, with a VHF radio mounted directly overhead. A hinged counter, about the same size as the stove, can be used for additional space at mealtime. A sink and small counter are opposite to port with the swing-out GPS chart plotter above.

A low threshold separates the cockpit from the cabin, and a box, which also serves as an icebox and is conveniently located between the sink and stove, provides a step. Companionway dropboards are stowed on either side of this niche, held in place with bungee cords. A fire extinguisher is mounted in one corner. Forward of the step and just above floor level is an electrical panel on one side and the sink's foot pump on the other — it's a good place for the pump; for the electrical panel, not so much.

Accommodations in the Ranger 26 are minimal but well thought out and practical, with priority given to a crew lounging below with coffee and sandwiches rather than sitting down to formal meals. The galley is about as

small as it could be but there is good specialized stowage. Additional stores may be kept in the copious cockpit lockers. Provisioning for three or four over a weekend or more may prove a challenge, but not beyond the means of a well-organized crew.

### The engine

Dave says that in several years of racing and cruising in the tidal waters of the Pacific Northwest, with its narrow passages and swift-running currents, *Bandit's* Yamaha 8-hp four-stroke outboard with 6-amp alternator is up to the task. Dave and Josh reckon they average about 5½ knots cruising while consuming a half gallon of gasoline per hour. Fuel is carried in two 6½-gallon tanks stowed in the starboard cockpit locker. It's a quiet engine, convenient to use and to remove for servicing. The throttle and gear shift are on the handle along with a power-tilt lever to get its 25-inch shaft down deep where

the prop is less likely to be lifted out of the water by following seas.

### Under way

Dave started the engine before lifting and swinging the tiller 180 degrees. This reversed the rudder direction fore and aft, allowing precise maneuvering as we backed out of the slip. With the rudder back in its normal position, Josh hoisted the mainsail, shut down the engine, and we sailed away in 8 to 10 knots of wind into Puget Sound. *Bandit* handled very well under the main alone, pointing relatively high and moving in a lively manner.

When Becky rolled out the genoa, we heeled slightly and quickly picked up speed. The overriding sensation was one of a boat much heavier than 5,860 pounds but very responsive to the tiller. We made about 5 knots close-hauled in the light wind; a little faster when reaching. The Ranger was beautifully balanced with just a small amount of weather helm on various points of sail on the wind. She came about surely and settled nicely into the other tack.

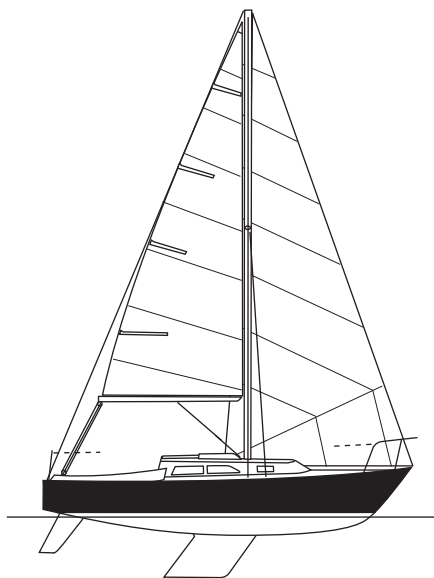
Under the PHRF formula, the standard boat with spinnaker and 150 percent genoa is given 207 seconds per mile; *Bandit* sails with a spinnaker and 130 percent genoa and rates 213. The Southern California fleet races at 198. Other hot boats of that era, the Cal 25 and Pearson 26, rate 222 and 216 respectively.

### Conclusion

The Ranger 26 is a well-built, stable, and forgiving boat that shows a good turn of speed when sailed well. After 38 years of hard use, including an enviable racing record, *Bandit* is as sound and agile as when she was new, attesting to continuous and careful maintenance by her several owners. All that and she's very pretty to look at too.

A check with Google shows several 1972 to 1976 Ranger 26s with asking prices from \$3,000 to \$5,800, which suggests that a boat as good as *Bandit* should be a very good buy indeed. *▲*

*Richard Smith, a contributing editor with Good Old Boat, is an architect. He specializes in designing and building very small houses and has built, restored, and maintained a wide variety of boats. These days, he and his wife, Beth, sail their Ericson Cruising 31, Kuma, on the reaches of Puget Sound.*



### Ranger 26

**Designer:** Gary Mull  
**Builder:** Ranger Yachts  
**LOA:** 26 feet 3 inches  
**LWL:** 21 feet 9 inches  
**Beam:** 8 feet 8 inches  
**Draft:** 4 feet 4 inches  
**Displacement:** 5,860 pounds  
**Ballast:** 2,050 pounds  
**Sail area:** 322 square feet  
**Disp./LWL ratio:** 254  
**SA/disp. ratio:** 15.9  
**Ballast/disp. ratio:** .35



Jimmie and Mary James sail *Bodacious*, their Santana 27, in the Pacific Northwest, sometimes making forays from Puget Sound into the Pacific Ocean.

# Santana 27

*A sturdy club racer and coastal cruiser*

by Richard Smith

**H**umphrey Bogart's sleek and much-loved yacht, *Santana* — a contraction of "Santa Ana" — was named for the katabatic winds that blow through the valleys of Southern California. W.D. "Bill" Schock, one of the leading lights of the fledgling West Coast fiberglass boatbuilding industry in the years immediately following World War II, thought it a good name as well, attaching it to no fewer than 16 models his company built: the Santana 21, 22, 23D, 23K, 25, 26, 28, 525, 228, 30, 30/30 PC, 30/30 GP, 30/30 RC, 35, 37, 39, and our review boat, the Santana 27.

Bill Schock grew up in Hollywood and played an important role in making sailing available to the growing middle class. He built a cold-molded International 14 for himself, but before it was finished he sold it and thus launched the W.D. Schock Boat Building business. The year was 1946. He went

on to produce the fiberglass Lehman 10, which was followed by the one-designs Snowbird, Sabot, and Schock 22. But it was the Lido 14, introduced in 1958, that secured the reputation of the company.

Bill met naval architect Gary Mull in 1965 and together they developed the popular Santana 22. Many of the 747 22s built still sail the windy waters of San Francisco Bay. Gary went on to design the Schock 37 and the Santana 27. The latter boat was in production from 1967 to 1974.

## Design

Our review boat, *Bodacious*, was built in 1969 and has been owned by Jimmie James of Kingston, Washington, since 1985. Gary Mull's design for the Santana 27 brought together many of the features that marked his work during the later 1960s and early '70s. The design shows none of the

characteristics often associated with the Cruising Club of America (CCA) rule, which was on the wane at the time, and predates the International Offshore Rule (IOR). All in all, the 27 is a wholesome design free of the sometimes unfortunate quirks of boats designed to take advantage of a rating rule.

The sheer has an easy spring in it from the transom to the nicely drawn spoon bow. The boat has a lively, almost sleek, appearance when viewed from the port side. From starboard, however, the offset companionway hatch and sea hood abaft the mast look ungainly.

A club racer/cruiser, it has a fin keel and spade rudder. The displacement/LWL ratio is a moderate 196. A generous sail plan gives a sail area/displacement ratio of 19, suggesting that the boat performs well.

Inboard and outboard models rate around 198 seconds per mile under



PHRF. For comparison, the largest fleets of Catalina 27s, inboard and outboard models, rate 204. A Cal 27-2 inboard rates 198 and the C&C 27 rates between 198 and 210.

### Construction

The Santana 27's construction is typical for its class of boat and the time it was built. The standard provisos apply. The hull is laid up of solid fiberglass and the deck consists of laminations of fiberglass separated by a plywood core. It's good, stiff, and solid construction but, when water penetrates the fiberglass, laminated decks are subject to rot, especially near fittings like cleats and chocks. The prudent owner will keep a close watch below the chainplates, a favorite

hiding place for rot. Ditto for the bottoms of bulkheads and low cabinetry.

Not long ago, Jimmie noticed softness underfoot in the deck area above the forward cabin. Following an established procedure, he drilled closely spaced, small-diameter holes into the top skin of the deck and injected Git-Rot epoxy into the affected area. It's not an easy fix but, if the damage isn't extensive, decks can be economically restored to previous stiffness in this manner.

The deck-to-hull joint is formed by the deck edge resting upon the outward-turning flange of the hull. The two moldings are bonded chemically and fastened mechanically with bolts and the inside of the joint is taped with fiberglass. A vinyl rubrail conceals and, to a certain extent, protects the joint. There has been no separation or water leakage at the joint on *Bodacious*.

Owners are advised to check that through-bolted deck hardware is backed up satisfactorily. In spite of the use of fender washers in lieu of backing

plates, there have been no failures in many years of hard use, with one exception: during a day of heavy sailing, the traveler extrusion tore away from the cockpit molding. Jimmie replaced it with a heavier piece of hardware bolted through the reinforced fiberglass molding with heavy backing plates.

By 2001, *Bodacious* was showing blistering on the bottom and a lot of stress cracks. Jimmie decided to grind the gelcoat off the hull, cockpit, topsides, and bottom and recoat everything. It looks fine and there has been no further blistering. He replaced the standing rigging at the same time.

The Santana 27 has three fixed portlights on each side. Leaks are not uncommon but the glass and frame can



**On *Bodacious*, a step at the forward end of the cockpit, above left, makes stepping onto the cabintop easier, but even though it folds up, it interferes with sitting against the bulkhead. It's safer anyway to step out onto the deck and climb onto the cabintop at the shrouds. With the tiller pilot steering, owner Jimmie James relaxes against the tall cockpit coamings, above right. Note the companionway offset to starboard. On some boats, this arrangement can make the companionway more vulnerable to flooding when heeled hard over on port tack. Because of the offset companionway, the safer side to stand when furling the mainsail is the port side, at left. Halyards are led aft to the narrow starboard side of the companionway, at right. The steep camber in the sidedecks is also evident.**







The table drops to make a double berth, at left. Removing the wooden strips in the overhead provides access to the nuts and bolts that secure deck hardware. The starboard-side galley, above, includes a two-burner stovetop, sink, drawers, lockers down low, and outboard stowage for sundry items. A common upgrade for do-it-yourselfers is a swing-out arm for critical instruments like a depth sounder and GPS.

be readily removed. Jimmie replaced the tempered glass of one of his ports and re-bedded it with little fuss.

The keel is made of cast iron and must be protected against corrosion with quality coatings, preferably epoxy and bottom paint.

### On deck

The deck on *Bodacious* is clean and unencumbered by superfluous gear, as befits a small yacht given to leaving the inland sea of Puget Sound to face the strong winds and currents of the Pacific Ocean while circumnavigating Vancouver Island. Jimmie and his wife, Mary, sail their boat hard and, for them, simplicity in all things is a guiding force.

A 22-pound Bruce anchor is kept in a husky bow roller with anchor tackle (15 feet of ¼-inch chain and 200 feet of ⅜-inch nylon) led through the deck and stored in an improvised box above the foot of the V-berth below. A 14-pound Danforth carried on the stern pulpit serves as a stern anchor.

Main, headsail, and spinnaker halyards, as well as first and second reefing lines, are led aft to clutches mounted on the starboard cabintop and tended by a Bariert #10 winch. Sheets are handled by Harken #32 self-tailing two-speed winches. Jimmie added Schaefer headsail-furling gear in 1998.

The foredeck and sidedecks are markedly cambered and — though providing a little more headroom below and good footing on deck to windward when heeled — they can be hazardous when working on deck at dockside. Chainplates mounted on the cabin



trunk ease the situation somewhat and provide for better sheeting angles for windward work.

Gary Mull resolved the conflict between the asymmetrical accommodation plan in the cabin and the topside area by offsetting the companionway. This makes for a rather crowded space to the starboard side of the hatch and sea hood.

### Cockpit

The cockpit is spacious and provides ample lounging and sleeping space while at anchor. The seats offer good back support with a convenient leg-bracing distance between them. Cockpit stowage is minimal, restricted to the lazarette that contains a couple of 6-gallon cans of gasoline in addition to everything else.

Over the years, Santana 27s were equipped with a variety of inboard engines, including the venerable Atomic 4 and Yanmar 1GM 10, but Jimmie proclaims the Yamaha 9.9 four-stroke outboard motor a perfect match for the boat. It's clean and quiet and has proven sufficiently reliable for his considerable cruising needs. Cruising speed is about 5 knots and tops out at about 6 in quiet water. A deep notch in the transom gets the prop low enough to get a good bite on the water. Cavitation has not been a serious problem. The 10-amp alternator provides enough battery-charging power for lights and judicious use of the Webasto heater over two or three nights at anchor.

The Yamaha is larger and heavier than the old Evinrude two-stroke it replaced and this required strengthening the transom below the cutout. While he

### Santana 27

**Designer:** Gary Mull  
**LOA:** 27 feet ½ inch  
**LWL:** 22 feet 6 inches  
**Beam:** 9 feet  
**Draft:** 4 feet 3 inches  
**Ballast:** 2,300 pounds  
**Displacement:** 5,000 pounds  
**Sail area:** 348 square feet  
**Disp./LWL ratio:** 196  
**SA/Disp. ratio:** 19

## “The boat is finely balanced with just the slightest weather helm in the gusts.”

was at it, Jimmie also added two corner braces to the transom at deck level.

On one occasion Jimmie took green water into the cockpit — about 6 inches — and found the two drains to be wholly inadequate, a common fault of many boats. Santana 27s were built with fiberglass tube “through-hulls” extending between the scuppers and hull. A hose for draining the sink was tied into one of these tubes. Jimmie replaced the tubes with bronze seacocks.

### Rig

The Santana 27 is a masthead sloop with a deck-stepped mast. The mainsail is on the small side and carries a very high boom. The idea was that a working jib would provide for leisurely cruising and a large foretriangle would accommodate big genoas and spinnakers for racing. But that was in the days before jib furlers. Today, Jimmie carries a 135 percent genoa. He tucks the first reef in the mainsail in about 18 knots of wind and adds the second when it steadies above 20, still flying the full genoa. On occasion, he reefs the genoa to settle her down.

Standing rigging consists of a forestay, single backstay, upper and lower shrouds attached to chainplates on the main bulkhead, and forward lower shrouds on separate chainplates.

### Belowdecks

Owing to the boat’s lower freeboard, and the cabin designed in proportion, headroom below is just 5 feet 9 inches, with a bit more under the companionway slide. At 6 feet, however, I found little difficulty moving about the Santana; just a slight nodding attitude seemed to do the trick.

The forward cabin has a wide — if a tad short for me — double berth. Beneath it to port is a 10-gallon holding tank for the marine toilet and to starboard a 15-gallon freshwater tank. A small hanging locker just aft of the berth on the starboard side is now outfitted with shelves for folded clothes. A sliding door separates the forward cabin from the main cabin.

The saloon layout is in the California tradition with a galley to starboard opposite an upholstered dinette with a fold-down table that converts into a double berth. Just abaft the galley is a

seat with an electrical distribution panel below. Good use is made of teak cabinetry and bulkheads and the atmosphere is light and cheerful. Jimmie installed a new overhead lining in 2001.

When they provision carefully, Mary and Jimmie James can cruise *Bodacious* independently for about a week without needing to obtain further supplies of food or water. In keeping with their general goal of simplicity, they cruise without ice, preferring to carry extra food in the icebox rather than blocks of ice. While we talked about the boat, Jimmie and I enjoyed two plenty-cold-enough beers cooled by the near-freezing waters of Puget Sound.

There are two quarter berths — a fairly normal one to starboard and a secondary cubbyhole to port with a tortured entry that only a curious child could discover. This storage area might be more useful if it were accessible through a cockpit seat hatch.

### Under way

The Yamaha started on the first pull. Compared with an inboard of similar horsepower, the engine was smooth and quiet without a hint of vibration or scent

of fuel. Backing was certain leaving the slip

and we made for deep water. Jimmie set the Autohelm tiller pilot and hoisted the main, complaining a little about the friction, as the halyards are led aft to the cockpit through turning blocks. I gathered in the fenders and tidied up stray halyards and sheet ends before taking the helm. Jimmie cranked in the sheet to unfurl the genoa and we leaned into a nice 10-knot breeze, quickly making 3.5 knots over the ground.

My first impression was how well the Santana stood up to the occasional gust, accelerating smoothly and shrugging off the wakes of ferries and passing powerboats with the assurance of a larger and heavier boat. A second impression was how close-winded the boat is. The Santana consistently went beyond the point that I thought would cause her to luff up. The boat is finely balanced with just the slightest weather helm in the gusts.

*Bodacious* is well laid out for singlehanded sailing, most of which can be done from the cockpit. But when coming into the dock, I found the narrow, heavily cambered sidedecks to be particularly hazardous.

### Conclusion

The Santana handles as well as any 27-footer can be expected to under sail and when using the outboard engine in a variety of conditions. Well sailed and with a good suit of sails, it’s very close-winded and generally well-behaved. Jimmie has found that, when handled conservatively, the Santana 27 can stand up to the rigors of occasional offshore cruises.

Prospective owners would do well to try moving forward and aft on the sidedecks a few times. The cambered decks, the contorted access to the port quarter berth, and the shortage of cockpit-accessible stowage are peculiar to the Santana 27 and should be evaluated carefully. ⚓

*Richard Smith, a contributing editor with Good Old Boat, is an architect. He specializes in designing and building very small houses and has built, restored, and maintained a wide variety of boats. He and his wife, Beth, sail their Ericson Cruising 31, Kuma, on the reaches of Puget Sound.*



A very, very long storage drawer is fitted under the companionway ladder and cockpit.



# Venture 25

*A MacGregor trailersailer  
that has earned  
Hall of Fame status*

*by Gregg Nestor*



**I**N 1967, AS A FINAL REQUIREMENT FOR EARNING HIS MBA AT Stanford Business School, Roger MacGregor wrote his thesis on automating sailboat manufacturing. Not too many years after that, Roger was credited with exposing the pastime of sailing to countless thousands of people.

Roger and his wife, MaryLou, started MacGregor Yacht Corporation in their garage. In 1968, they introduced the Venture 21. As their business rapidly developed, production soon outgrew their garage and they relocated to a new facility they built in Costa Mesa, California.

In 1973, the Venture 25 debuted. With its swing keel, lightweight design, and one-person easy rigging, this boat soon became the flagship of the line and remained so for 14 years. It was extremely popular with first-time sailboat owners, especially since it cost about the same amount as a new car. After 7,000 boats, production of the Venture 25 ended in 1987 with the introduction of the water-ballasted MacGregor 26.

MacGregor's Venture 25 earned lasting recognition by fostering new enjoyment and growth in sailing as a recreational activity. In January of 2000, the Venture 25 was one of two boats inducted into the American Sailboat Hall of Fame in Newport, Rhode Island.

The MacGregor Yacht Corporation is still located in Costa Mesa, is still family run, and is still manufacturing

sailboats the Roger MacGregor way. The company is one of America's most successful boatbuilders. The Venture 25, has an overall length of 24 feet 11 inches, a beam of 7 feet 11 inches, and displaces 2,300 pounds with 600 pounds of ballast.

## **Design and construction**

The Venture 25 displays functional lines with just a hint of sheer, a slight spoon-shaped bow, and an almost plumb

stern. The boat is of uncured fiberglass construction, albeit a bit on the thin side. The construction is stiffened up by the combination of a fiberglass pan and glassed-in deck-support stringers. The forward and aft portions of the hull are filled with foam blocks, giving the boat positive

flotation. The hull-to-deck joint is sealed with adhesive, mechanically fastened, and covered with an aluminum-and-vinyl rubrail.

The Venture 25 features a retractable keel, providing 600 pounds of ballast in the form of cast iron. With the keel retracted into its trunk, the boat draws only 18 inches, as compared to 5 feet when fully extended. The keel is raised and lowered with a winch that has a friction clutch. The winch is just inside the cabin, beneath the companionway. When the winch handle is released, the friction clutch automatically brakes and locks the keel in any position. Once

*“MacGregor’s Venture 25 earned lasting recognition by fostering new enjoyment and growth in sailing as a recreational activity”*

**Blain Popp, of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, sails *Tobenamed*, his 1979 Venture 25, on facing page. It is shown at the dock, at right. Notice the fitting for securing the mast, which doubles as a tripping hazard. A view of the pop-top in the raised position (increasing headroom to 6 feet 1 inch), below.**

the keel has been fully lowered, a 3/8-inch by 3 1/2-inch locking bolt can be inserted through the keel trunk and keel, locking the keel down.

### **On deck**

The foredeck of the Venture 25 is relatively long and narrow. Almost directly in its center is a flush, opaque, forward hatch. A few inches forward and slightly to starboard of the hatch is a 4-inch-high stainless-steel pipe flange (see photo at right). This item was an option on early models. For trailering, a Y-bracket is inserted into this fitting, allowing the forward portion of the unstepped mast to be secured at this location. When not trailering, the fitting makes an exceptionally good tripping hazard. This unique item, like most of the deck hardware, is through-bolted. Some of the deck hardware even has plywood backing plates.

From stem to stern, all horizontal surfaces are non-skid. There are bow and stern pulpits and 18-inch-high stanchions with single lifelines that terminate at the start of the cockpit. The shrouds are outboard of 6-inch-wide sidedecks (on later models the sidedecks were eliminated in favor of a raised deck), and there are no handrails on the cabintop. The Venture 25 is minimalist when it comes to the use of wood. Top-side brightwork is limited to just six pieces: five around the companionway, including the sliding track and the tiller.

*“The cabin’s standing headroom is easily expanded to 6 feet 1 inch by means of a large ‘pop-top.’ This is especially nice when you’re using the galley. With the addition of optional side curtains, the pop-top frame can be converted into a dodger of sorts.”*

The cockpit is 6 feet 6 inches long with 10-inch-high coamings that afford reasonable back support. While the cockpit lacks a bridge deck, it is self-bailing. There is a locker to starboard, which gives access to the lazarette. However, there is neither a locker nor a designated place for an outboard motor’s gas tank. Owners must choose between stowing the tank beneath the tiller on the cockpit sole or using an outboard with a self-contained gas tank. On the stern is a transom-mounted, fiberglass, kick-up rudder and an adjustable outboard-motor bracket.

### **Belowdecks**

Entering the cabin of a Venture 25 is a three-step affair. The first step is onto the keel winch housing, step two is the keel trunk, and step three the cabin’s non-skid sole.

In the bow, and a half step up, is the 6-foot long by 5-foot 2-inch wide V-berth, with the forward hatch opening direct-

ly overhead. Just aft of the hatch is a deck support stringer that extends downward about 2 inches. If you’re not paying attention when you’re in the V-berth, the low-hanging support will get your attention.

Aft and to starboard is a head area (with a Porta Potti) that measures a generous 38 inches by 32 inches. Good knee room! Since the Porta Potti is not secured to the cabin







**The dinette on the starboard side, top. View from the V-berth aft, center. The galley lies on the port side, bottom.**

stove-top cooking surface. Beneath the galley and behind a sliding door is stowage space for cooking gear and the 3-gallon water tank.

Directly across from the galley, on the starboard side, is a dinette with seating for four and sitting headroom of 38 inches. By lowering the plastic laminate table and using the backrest cushions as a filler, the dinette converts to a 42-inch-wide double berth. Directly aft of the dinette/double berth is the starboard access to the cockpit locker.

Diagonally across from the dinette is the 2-foot by 6-foot 2-inch port quarterberth, bringing the total number of berths to five. Aft of the quarterberth is the port access to the lazarette and the boat's battery. There is stowage beneath all berths/settees.

The textured pan gives the lower portion of the cabin (from deck down) a finished appearance, but overhead the raw fiberglass detracts from the boat's interior looks. There is a keel trunk that runs from beneath the cockpit forward to the bulkhead that separates the main cabin from the head and V-berth area. Molded into the pan and to port of the keel trunk is a walkway that allows for free movement fore and aft. To use the dinette, one needs to step over the trunk or risk bruised shins. Cabin illumination is good and is provided by five (on later models, four) long oval, non-opening portlights.



*“When the wind picks up, the boat develops weather helm, and in heavy weather it will round up before you realize what’s happening. Reducing sail area helps in heavy weather.”*

The cabin's standing headroom is easily expanded to 6 feet 1 inch by means of a large “pop-top.” This is especially nice when you're using the galley. With the addition of optional side curtains, the pop-top frame can be converted into a dodger of sorts.

### **The rig**

The Venture 25 is a sloop with a deck-stepped mast that rises to 28 feet above the cabintop. The mast and the boom are constructed of anodized aluminum. The rig is simple, with a single spreader, upper and lower shrouds, and a single backstay. The external halyards are double-braid polyester, cleated at the base of the mast. The total sail area for this fractional rig is 231 square feet, comprised of a mainsail and a working jib. A 130-percent genoa, sporting 175 square feet of sail area, was also available as an option.

Fixed jib fairleads are located forward on the cabin-top with corresponding jam cleats placed on the cabin's aft edge. Short genoa tracks (17 inches) and cars are situ-



sole, its use while underway could prove to be challenging, especially if conditions become a little rough. For privacy, this area is separated from the main cabin by a wood-grained plastic laminate bulkhead and a curtain running up the centerline from bulkhead to V-berth.

On the port side and amidships is the one-piece fiberglass galley unit that is molded into the pan. This consists of a top-loading icebox with a plastic laminate cutting board cover, a single sink with hand pump, and an area for a

*“Like all boats that use exposed cast iron as ballast, the Venture’s keel is prone to corrosion. Add age and salt water to this rusting potential, and the condition may be significant.”*

ated at the forward portion of the cockpit on each sidedeck. Adjacent to these on the cockpit coamings are Arco #6 single-speed sheet winches and jam cleats. End-boom sheeting is a triangular affair (Crosby rig) that runs back and forth from boom to the port and starboard corners where the coaming and transom meet. Cleating is on the port side. The mainsail comes without reef points. However, the standard gooseneck fitting serves as a simple roller-reefing system. By removing the retaining and pivot pins, the mainsail can be “roller reefed” around the boom.

### Under way

The Venture 25’s light construction makes it a tender craft. The retractable keel expands its sailing grounds to include shoal-water areas. With the keel fully extended, and using the working jib, the boat points well. Employing the 130-percent genoa increases the boat’s performance. The Venture 25 has a history of being a competitive racer.

When the wind picks up, the boat develops weather helm, and in heavy weather it will round up before you realize what’s happening. Reducing sail area helps in heavy weather. Downwind control isn’t the best. It’s often difficult to steer a straight course on a run. When sailing “in the groove” the keel cable may hum. This can be annoying or even alarming. To eliminate this vibration and the associated humming, slacken the cable.

### Points to check

When surveying a Venture 25, there are three areas to pay particular attention to: the swing keel, the hull, and the standing rigging.

Like all boats that use exposed cast iron as ballast, the Venture’s keel is prone to

corrosion. Add age and salt water to this rusting potential, and the condition may be significant. In addition to the keel itself, there have been reports of corrosion of the keel cable and terminal. Also check for


leaks around the keel’s lower pivot bolt, as well as electrolysis and wear of the keel at this pivot point.

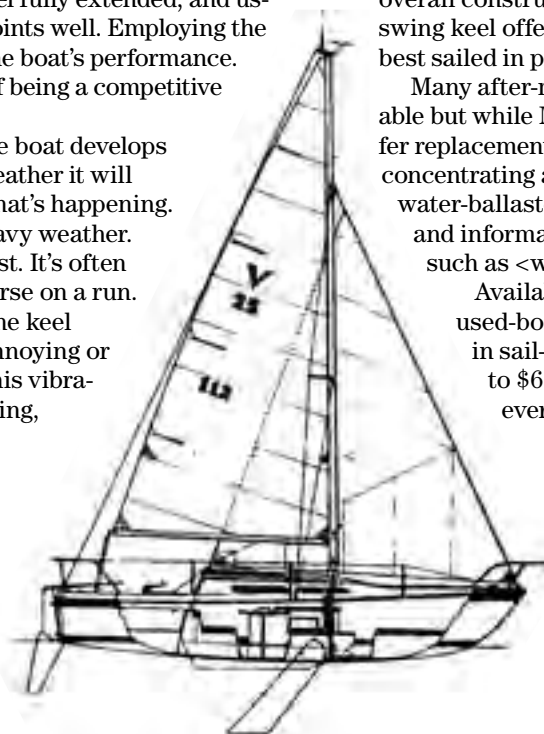
MacGregor boats, the Venture 25 included, have the reputation for being lightly built. The hulls are a bit thin, and they do flex, so check for cracks. The standing rigging is lightweight and, over the years, may have been stressed. Carefully examine the rigging and plan to replace much of the stainless-steel wire.

### Summing up

The Venture 25 is a good first big boat. Keep in mind that its overall construction and rigging are on the light side. The swing keel offers shallow-water sailing; and the boat is best sailed in protected waters.

Many after-market upgrade and repair parts are available but while MacGregor Yacht Corporation can offer replacement parts and technical support, they are concentrating all their energy on the MacGregor 26, their water-ballasted “powersailer.” Some of the best support and information is available from independent sources, such as <[www.macgregorowners.com](http://www.macgregorowners.com)>

Availability of Venture 25s is good. And on the used-boat market, typical pricing for a Venture 25 in sail-away condition is in the range of \$4,000 to \$6,000, with condition and upgrades being everything. 



### MacGregor Venture 25

**LOA:** 24 feet 11 inches  
**Beam:** 7 feet 11 inches  
**Draft:** 5 feet / 18 inches; CB down / up  
**Displacement:** 2,300 pounds  
**Sail area:** 231 square feet  
**Ballast:** 600 pounds

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# Yamaha 25



*A fine racer/cruiser  
for a small family*

by Durkee Richards

ED LAWRENCE

**Y**AMAHA IS A WELL-KNOWN NAME IN musical instruments and motorcycles. But sailboats? Perhaps one in a hundred sailors knows that during the late 1970s and '80s Yamaha built a fine line of sailboats, with distribution throughout North America and Europe. They ranged in length from 21 to 37 feet. Most were cruiser/racer designs. One of the smaller models, the Yamaha 25, was available in two versions: a standard rig and the Mark II with a taller mast, more sail area, and spinnaker gear (spinnaker halyard and a turning block for the foreguy on the foredeck).

Yamaha developed an in-house engineering and design team to support its sailboat business. Product literature describes how the design process for the hull moved from preliminary lines drawings to tank testing using the company's own test facility. At the same time, other members of the design team made mockups of the cockpit, deck, and interior to assure good ergonomics. Prototypes were built and tested and then refined be-

fore moving into production.

Yamaha product literature from the 1970s touts its success on the race-course. *Magician V*, a modified production 24-footer, won the 1978 Quarter-Ton World Championship. Earlier, Yamaha Motors had followed a similar strategy with motorcycles: gain visibility with success in competition and then follow up with a full product line for a broader consumer market.

Specialty Yachts in Vancouver, British Columbia, was the primary dealer for Yamaha yachts in the Pacific Northwest. I spoke with a member of their staff, Lawrence Fronczek, who recalled the Yamaha yachts with obvious fondness. He had sailed extensively on models from 25 feet (the smallest his dealership imported) to 36 feet. He characterized them as "extremely robust and well built" with "well-thought-out interior layouts." Specialty Yachts had very few warranty problems to deal with. He could recall no incidence of osmotic blistering or delamination, even on older boats that came in for routine maintenance.

## First impression

When you approach a Yamaha 25, the first impression will be of a lithe and lively vessel that was designed to sail well. The influence of the International Offshore Rule (IOR) is evident, as this model was designed to compete in the Quarter-Ton class. Whether you see her from bow or stern, you'll notice the trademark tumblehome. Because beam increases wetted surface area, and therefore friction that slows a boat, the IOR gave credit to beamy designs, but designers attempted to thwart the intent by adding beam only above the waterline.

Maximum beam in the IOR designs is not carried well aft as is currently in fashion. Rather, the hull typically tapers to a rather slender transom with pinched ends. The moderate bow and stern overhangs result in a fairly short waterline by today's standards. However, the buttock lines at the stern flow smoothly upward so that the effective waterline lengthens quickly as the vessel heels.

As with any rating rule, designers

exploited whatever part of the IOR they could to gain even a small advantage on the racecourse. Sometimes this resulted in peculiar bumps on the hulls. Sometimes a portion of the ballast ended up in the bilge rather than in the keel where one would normally expect it. When that was the case, the boats were prone to “death rolling” when pushed hard downwind. Fortunately, the Yamaha 25 seems free from these excesses. The hull has a smooth, fair shape, and all the ballast is in the deep cast-iron keel.

### Straight sheer

The sheer is nearly straight, and the coachroof is smoothly contoured with tapered portlights port and starboard. The masthead sloop rig is conservative. The mast is deck-stepped with single spreaders, cap shrouds, and fore-and-aft lowers. The backstay is split and incorporates a block-and-tackle tension adjuster. The mast is stepped relatively far aft, so the jib and genoa are important in generating power. On larger boats, this design choice can lead to genoas that require a strong crew to sheet home. On a 25-foot boat, however, this should not be a concern. All halyards are run internally with nicely detailed sheaves where the lines exit the mast. The rudder is hung on a skeg, which gives added protection against the drift logs too often encountered in the Pacific Northwest.

The cockpit provides sufficient working space for a race crew, yet the boat should be easy to singlehand. The halyards are led aft to coachroof-mounted winches and linestoppers. The mainsheet traveler is close at hand, and the mainsail is sheeted to the boom end, which helps keep sheeting forces low. The engine controls also are close at hand on the starboard side of the cockpit. These controls are a clue to an unusual feature in a 25-foot sailboat: an inboard diesel engine.

On deck there are stoutly built and well-mounted stainless-steel bow and stern pulpits. A single vinyl-coated stainless-steel lifeline runs along each sidedeck. The stanchions feel quite secure. The foredeck is solid underfoot with a nice camber. A small anchor locker is molded into the starboard side of the foredeck and drains overboard. A translucent hatch pro-

vides ventilation for the V-berth and could be used for hoisting or dousing a spinnaker.

### Easy access

The sidedecks provide easy access fore and aft, with the chainplates set inboard. An unusual feature is a molded gutter just inside the aluminum toerail. Just aft of the shrouds, the sidedeck has a molded-in ridge to deflect water away from the cockpit. Farther aft, the sidedecks feature a concave profile, which makes for comfortable seating when sailing to weather.

When stepping into the cockpit, you'll notice the bridge deck and locker below the companionway. The Yamaha 25 brochure suggests this would be a good place to store a life raft. Clearly, the design team intended these boats to be used for more than daysailing. There is another, larger locker running athwartships at the stern.

At the end of the cabin bulkhead, port and starboard, are clever recesses

**The Yamaha 25, facing page, was designed during the heyday of the IOR, a rating rule that treated beam favorably because it tends to add wetted surface area. George Zimmerman and family sail *Escape*. George maintains the [Yamahasiswailboats.org](http://Yamahasiswailboats.org) website. This closeup of the bow, above right, shows the recess or channel that runs the perimeter of the hull-to-deck joint, which is through-bolted forward, and fastened with Monel rivets everywhere else. An adhesive adds strength as well as making the joint watertight. Boats designed to the IOR, at right, have small mainsails and large foretriangles, resulting in big genoas that provide much of the driving power. On larger boats, they can be hard to sheet home on a windy day.**

adjacent to each of the winches on the coachroof for storing coiled-up halyards. A Seahood provides protection for the companionway hatch and extends outboard far enough to enclose the lines running aft from the mast. Two Dorade vents are mounted near the forward end of the Seahood.

Going below, you'll find a surprisingly spacious interior with several clever touches. The V-berth is large, in part because the mast is stepped well aft and thus the main bulkhead is well aft too. The cabin also seems roomy because there is no compression post to impede movement. This is a plus.

A potential negative is that a strong deck support of some kind is required to carry the mast compression loads. In the case of the Yamaha 25, the



DURKEE RICHARDS



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## Boat review



Lifting the center panel of the V-berth, at left, provides excellent access to the single-cylinder Yanmar diesel engine. During the late 1970s, Yanmar manufactured three models of small, horizontal diesels. When restored to its full size, the V-berth, at right, is very spacious. A portable toilet is located underneath the seat cushion to starboard.

molded fiberglass arch looks positively massive and effectively carries rigging stresses to each side of the hull. This arch is integrated into the main bulkhead, which also supports the chainplates for the cap shrouds. The overall engineering of this system leaves a very favorable impression.

### Privacy curtain

A standard marine head is hidden away behind panels at the aft end of the V-berth on the starboard side. The

privacy curtain that closes off the V-berth also shields the head when in use. A holding tank for the head was not standard equipment. Most owners in the United States have opted to install flexible holding tanks in the bow.

No coachroof liner is used in the V-berth area. Instead, one can see the nicely finished underside of the deck. The contours of the deck help provide stiffness, and molded-in stringers provide more stiffness where needed. Additional reinforcement is visible

around the hatch.

The main cabin features a compact galley to port. Lifting a panel reveals a gimballed single-burner alcohol stove and a stainless-steel sink. A foot pump provides water to the sink from the 9½-gallon tank. Dish storage is built into the locker behind the sink and stove. Below the dish locker and behind the stove and sink there is a modest icebox. Standing headroom is available only for those shorter than 5 feet 7 inches.

## Creating Kando together

by George Zimmerman

In Japan in 1887, Torakusu Yamaha built a reed organ and, based upon its success, began taking orders for more. Starting its life as a music company, Yamaha has grown and diversified into an international conglomerate with 84 consolidated subsidiaries, annual revenues of \$4.5 billion, and more than 24,000 employees worldwide. Today, Yamaha is a leader in many industries: musical instruments, audio-visual and information technology products, home furnishings, motorized vehicles, specialty metals, music education, and resort facilities.

Yamaha's corporate mission and goals translate into products that are high in quality, technologically sophisticated, and consumer-oriented. Their

corporate slogan is "Creating Kando Together." *Kando* is a Japanese word that signifies an inspired state of mind.

Yamaha Motors, the company division manufacturing sailboats, was founded in 1955. Starting with motorcycles, it has grown into a worldwide company that develops and sells products for business and leisure pursuits on land, in the sky, and at sea.

### Racing heritage

In 1960, Yamaha Motors introduced its first fiberglass boats and outboard motors. Yamaha Motors entered the sailboat production business in 1965. Its first model was a rowboat rigged with a sail. A year later Yamaha developed and began production of a

14-foot catamaran. By 1970 the company had three sailboats in production: the Yamaha-15DX, Yamaha-21DX, and Yamaha 36. They spanned the spectrum of sailboats, from sailing dinghy/daysailer to a large ocean-going sailboat. This variety still is true of the company's range of models today.

As a result of a sophisticated design and testing process, Yamaha's early designs won races. In 1975, *Wing of Yamaha* won the Trans-Pacific single-handed yacht race held between Hawaii and Okinawa, and in 1978 *Magician V* won the Quarter-Ton World Championship. In 1983 *Supervitch* won the Pan Am Cup yacht race in its class. The company's first entry into the Whitbread round-the-globe

race, with a yacht called *Yamaha*, won overall in the W60 class. Yamaha also built the Japanese challenge boats for the America's Cup races held in 1992 and 1995. Using the experience gained from its racing sailboats, the company designed an extensive line of dinghies, racer/cruisers, and cruisers, manufacturing them in large numbers (at least in sailboat terms) for the Japanese and other Asian markets. During the 1970s and '80s they also exported select sailboat models to the U.S. and Canadian markets, primarily on the West Coast.

### Models exported

In its racer/cruiser line of sailboats, Yamaha exported the 21, 25, 26, 30, 33, 36, and 37 models. These racer/cruisers have a dis-



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**A convertible dinette to port sleeps one person, at left. The woodwork and other finishing details are generally well done. On a small boat, where there isn't enough beam for an off-center cabin layout, there is no bulkhead or compression post to transfer the rigging loads to the hull and keel. On the Yamaha 25, a massive fiberglass arch, at right, integrated with the main bulkhead, does the job.**

There is seating for two on either side of an adjustable table on the starboard side across from the galley. The aft seat is actually part of the starboard quarter berth. The table also serves as the chart table. When folded out athwartships, the table aligns with the cover panel over the galley and can provide dining space for four. Again, the aft seat on the port side is part of the quarter berth on that side.

The table serves one more func-

tion. When folded up, it can be lowered and covered with a cushion. It then aligns with the quarter berth and forward seat to provide more seating space. Or it could provide sleeping space for a fifth crewmember — preferably the shortest one. The quarter berths are surprisingly spacious and make good sea berths.

Lockers behind the seats to port and starboard provide storage for small items. More storage is located

underneath the quarter berths and between them. Fixed portlights to port and starboard provide for ample natural lighting. Strategically located incandescent lights provide nighttime lighting.

### Construction details

The hull is built of solid fiberglass. A molded “grid-and-box” structure is incorporated below the sole to provide additional strength. The deck also is

tinctive appearance that can almost be described as jet-like. All were heavily influenced by the IOR rating rules of the time. Once you became acquainted with their sloped coachroofs, tumblehome hulls, triangular portlights, graceful bow entries, and reverse transoms, it is easy to distinguish Yamaha sailboats.

Yamaha also exported the Yamaha 24 motorsailer that was designed to be easily sailed with wheel steering and self-tacking jib. A shoal keel opened up shallow waters and allowed for trailering. Also produced was the Yamaha 35 CS, a distinctive-looking pure cruising sloop. In the mid-1980s the company broke from its distinctive jet-like styling and exported a more conventional-looking 28-foot cruising sloop to the United States and Canada.

### The design process

Initially more than two dozen people were involved in the design of a Yamaha sailboat: yacht designers, engineers, model makers, computer technicians, production planners, and test sailors. The company hired non-sailing engineers and taught them to sail, possibly accounting for the innovations seen on Yamahas.

The process began with design goals developed for each model. Drawing preliminary lines was the next step. Yamaha was one of the early users of computers to aid in the design process and for basic analysis and study. From the preliminary lines drawings and the computer models and analysis, small models of the hull were made. The hull shape then was tested in a tank, followed by further

analysis. Use of a computer and a test tank enabled the design team to experiment early in the design process with different solutions to a problem.

While the hull shape testing was underway, life-size mockups of the deck, cockpit, and interior were constructed. Test sailors used these mockups to identify problems and then develop practical, real-world solutions. Scale models of the interior and exterior were also built.

These three-dimensional models gave the design team an opportunity to review lines drawing deficiencies and to visualize how the various parts of the boat would interact with each other. Production planners also used the models built during the design phase to develop and lay out the

manufacturing and assembly process.

The final stage was building prototypes for testing, which usually meant racing to see if the prototype performed to design goals and expectations. If the boat did not perform as expected, modifications were made or designs changed until the design goals were met. This process, while costly, led to Yamaha's generally good reputation.

### Owner support

Like many sailboat manufacturers, Yamaha Motors disappeared from the North American marketplace in the late 1980s. Today, it still designs and manufactures sailboats but only for the Japanese domestic market. However, the company still sells parts for the earlier models.



## Boat review

solid fiberglass with some marine plywood coring used to increase panel stiffness for flat surfaces, for example, around the companionway. As mentioned, molded-in stringers and ribs are incorporated under the foredeck to provide additional strength and stiffness.

The hull-to-deck joint is unusual, even to Yamaha, I think. Product literature for the Yamaha 25 and 30 shows an outward flange. However, at least on the Yamaha 25, it is more complicated than that. The top few inches of the hull are built in a C-shape, creating a recess or channel running the length of the hull underneath the T-shaped aluminum toerail (see photo on Page 47). The deck flange bears on the top of the C.

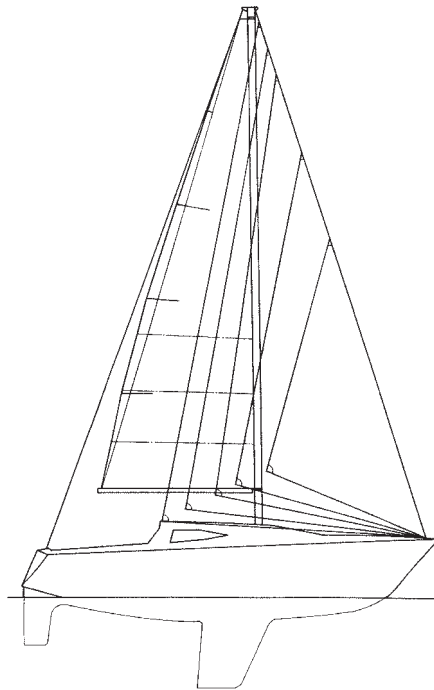
The horizontal surfaces of the deck and hull are glued and mechanically bonded. Monel rivets are used along most of the joint, except at the bow where the toerail is through-bolted. The joint is somewhat protected by the tumblehome of the topsides, which will take the brunt of the impact from less-than-artful dockings.

The cap shrouds are secured to stainless-steel chainplates that are bolted to the main bulkhead. They seem appropriately sized for the rigging loads. The aft lower shrouds are secured to plates bolted to the sidedecks, with a stainless-steel backing plate belowdecks. The forward lowers are similarly secured but with additional support coming from a stainless-steel rod that runs diagonally back down to the main bulkhead. These supports for the lower shrouds are evidently sufficient for the rigging loads of a 25-foot boat since the deck is robustly constructed. The owners' group does not report any associated problems. I did not note any flexing of the sidedeck when pulling vigorously on the lower shrouds.

### Under way

The winds were very light the day of our test sail, but I can say the Yamaha 25 will ghost beautifully under jib alone. Though it's a different model, a husband and wife in my local sail fleet owned and raced a Yamaha 33 for several years. They spoke highly of its performance under sail and felt it was at its best when working to windward.

The PHRF rating for the largest fleet of 25s — albeit just four boats



## Yamaha 25

**LOA:** 24 feet 9 inches  
**LWL:** 19 feet 3 inches  
**Beam:** 8 feet 11 inches  
**Draft:** 5 feet 5 inches  
**Displacement:** 3,750 pounds  
**Ballast:** 1,435 pounds  
**Sail area:** 283 square feet  
**Displ./LWL ratio:** 235  
**SA/Displ. ratio:** 18.8  
**PHRF rating:** 210

— is 210, roughly the same as a C&C 25. A J/24 rates 171.

When you lift the center panel of the V-berth you'll find a single-cylinder Yanmar diesel. This is a very unusual installation. The engine, a model YSB-8, has a horizontal cylinder. Yanmar produced three models of horizontal, raw-water-cooled, single-cylinder engines of 8-hp and 12-hp between 1974 and 1980. In general, raw-water-cooled diesels require a bit more maintenance than freshwater-cooled engines. So check engine condition and maintenance records during a pre-purchase survey. A blower was standard equipment to help remove engine heat and fumes. The engine in *Escape*, George Zimmerman's Yamaha 25, which I test-sailed, started quickly and was surprisingly smooth for a single-cylinder engine.

The overall height of the engine is low enough that it can be easily tucked under the V-berth. Overall engine access is good. The 6.6-gallon,


stainless-steel fuel tank is mounted in a wood-paneled locker on the port side just forward of the bulkhead. It is vented up through a nearby stanchion — another nice touch. Access to the fuel tank is easy. In fact, George told me of removing his tank and taking it ashore for cleaning when he encountered a problem with contaminated fuel. Motoring range is said to be at least 100 nautical miles at 5.5 knots.

Placing the engine under the V-berth frees up room elsewhere and helps balance the boat. But it does necessitate a long driveshaft with a center support bearing where the shaft passes through a frame in the bilge between the transmission and the strut and Cutless bearing. The propeller ends up just aft of the keel. This location significantly reduces prop walk when backing. Hence, these boats can be easily turned to port or starboard when backing out of a slip.

### Summary

The Yamaha sailboats were well designed and constructed. The performance of the Yamaha 25 lives up to the design goal of a cruiser/racer.

The Yamaha 25 should be a good choice for anyone who wants a boat for daysailing or club racing. The creative use of space belowdecks also makes this boat a good candidate for cruising with a small family. More good news is that replacement parts are still available from Yamaha Motors. A Yamaha 25 will not be easy to find since most owners of Yamaha sailboats tend to keep them for a long time. But they are worth the hunt.

Used models of Yamaha sailboats are found mostly in the western United States and Canada. Yachtworld, the on-line sailboat brokerage <<http://www.yachtworld.com>>, usually has six to eight Yamahas for sale. As they are not well-known, these quality boats can prove to be a good value. Yachtworld shows the average asking price for a 1977 25-foot C&C and a 1977 Yamaha 25 to be in the \$8,000 to \$12,000 price range. The Yamaha, however, has an inboard diesel. 

## Resources

### Yamaha websites:

<<http://www.yamahasailboats.org>>  
<<http://www.sailboatowners.com>>