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39**



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39

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STORY BY ROBERT M. LANE

OAK HARBOR ON WHIDBEY ISLAND in northwest Washington State is shallow and much of it goes dry on a low tide. The only way out for boaters is a narrow, but well-marked channel that leads into Saratoga Passage.

Usually, there's no problem in safely following the channel to deep water. But on a recent outing aboard a new North Pacific 39, a brisk southeast wind was jamming against an ebb current and generating a continuous rank of hard-spanking seas. I feared we were in for a bad time because turning away from the wind would put us in shallow water and holding to our course would bring a bashing.





Robert M. Lane

Before we passed the outermost red marker, the North Pacific had shown she wasn't the least bit intimidated by 2- and 3-foot seas; it seemed almost like fun as we ran bow-on into sharply breaking waves that were challenging, but well short of being dangerous. The worst part, truly, was a near-tropical downpour that fogged the view ahead.

The gently flared bow turned away most of the seas, but occasionally one broke high and sailed overhead on the wind, drenching the boat from bow to stern. The 39 took them neatly, without pounding or laboring. The boat was light on fuel and had no ballast in the bilge, but she handled as if she were both heavier and deeper.

After we were in deeper water and at the urging of Trevor Brice, the British Columbia businessman who builds, imports, and sells North Pacific yachts, I turned to starboard and put the wind and seas on the beam.



Top: Storage available below and adjoining saloon settee. Sculptured table serves two nicely and its rounded edges won't cause bruises.

Above: The galley has space for two, and a generous view. A deck hatch opens to a huge storage area.

She rolled of course, because all boats roll, but the motion—both over and back—was surprisingly gentle, thanks in part to a hard chine. Her draft of 4 feet 6 inches helped moderate the roll, too.

When we had run far enough past the outer marker to clear the shallows at Polnell Point to the north, I turned and put the wind behind us and we settled back for an easier ride. Farther on, we rounded Strawberry Point and

turned into Skagit Bay. Rain was so thick we needed all eyes as well as binoculars, radar, and navigation software to find the line of red channel markers that would lead us through more shallow water and into the narrow and shoaling Swinomish Channel that winds past La Conner through rich farmland and toward Anacortes and a PassageMaker Trawler Fest.

To warm a cold boat and its crew and to blow away window fog, Trevor started the standard Espar heater



for the first time. A hydronic system is an option, but the air system on the 39 worked well, banishing our deep chill and blowing away the mist on the windows.

While she was moored in Anacortes, I spent hours over several days on the boat, talking with Trevor, and with the help of *PMM* Technical Editor Steve D'Antonio, checking out systems.

To end the suspense: I liked the boat, found it well built, and easy to operate. There were a few issues—minor ones—and Trevor already has taken action to correct them. This is a boat I would confidently take into my favorite cruising areas along the Inside Passage. She's offered at \$335,000, delivered on the West Coast.

GETTING BETTER

North Pacific has come a long way since Trevor and his father, John, drew lines for their ideal cruising boat on a parking lot almost a decade ago. Their first, a 43-footer, was launched



Top: Pilothouse helm seat offers comfort and a clear view. Above: Teak-paneled passage leads below to the master stateroom and head, and includes storage spaces.

in Vancouver, B.C., in 2004, and I recall bouncing over its wake in a small boat trying for underway photos.

They used an old CHB hull mold for the first 10 boats and designed their own deckhouse and interior. The 39 uses that veteran hull design (it dates back to the 1960s and was popular among boatbuilders in Taiwan for years). It's built today with new molds in the FuHua factory south of Shanghai, China.

Trevor was of college age then. Now 30, he is North Pacific. Although he is based in Surrey, B.C. (it's just north of the international boundary), I think his iPhone is his office. He's a low-overhead builder-dealer, with one employee based in Oak Harbor who handles commissioning and warranty work. An East Coast representative does similar work. His wife, Morgan, a first-grade teacher in British Columbia, often works with him in showing North Pacific boats.



Robert M. Lane

With full instrumentation and a 360-degree view, the flybridge is the place to be in fair weather.

He now offers four models (28, 38, 39, and 43 feet) and has sold and delivered 100 boats, a dozen of which have been 39s. Many of his first buyers were from Canada and the northwest corner of the United States, and now he's hoping to increase sales via an East Coast campaign.

North Pacific boats have improved over the years because Trevor listens to comments and is not offended by suggestions and criticisms. Trevor and John heard a slew of remarks after the first 43 was launched, and many led to changes. (I remember suggesting that interior deck hatches be hinged; all but one on the new 39 are hinged.)

Another example: Steve and I noted that electrical connections on the back of the hinged 120VAC breaker panel on the test boat could be touched, possibly causing a shock, if someone swung it open. That violates standards recommended by the American Boat and Yacht Council.

Trevor's reaction was to ask how best to provide the protection required by ABYC. (Several suggestions were offered. In order of complexity they were: screw it closed, install a lock, or cover the exposed wiring with a plastic panel.)

Trevor chose to add a lock to the test boat panel and told me that the next 39s, already in the United States, have plexiglass panels covering the back of the breaker panel or a lock on the outer cover plate.

FuHua is asked to follow ABYC standards, Trevor

said. "They have the book and I think the boats are very, very close," he told me.

A CLOSER LOOK

The 39 has no side decks. That's a loss, but the bonus it creates is a larger saloon, with plenty of space for cooks and helpers in the galley, and a settee for those who watch.

We entered the boat by stepping onto the swim platform and through a transom door. A pair of inverted-U, stainless steel "staples" set into the edge of the platform provide something to grab while stepping aboard.

The aft deck is not large enough for an array of lounging furniture, but is suitable for line handling, fishing, and crabbing. A ladder leads to the upper deck, which also can be reached via steps from outside the pilothouse. (The buyer of the boat we helped deliver had put off installation of the ladder.)

In the saloon a settee is fitted against the starboard and aft walls. An L-shaped table, softly sculpted so there are no sharp edges to nick passersby, seats a couple nicely.

The galley is opposite, with a double stainless steel sink in the corner, a Corian-surfaced work counter and propane range along the port side, and storage space and a refrigerator/freezer arranged along the forward wall. The saloon is open to the pilothouse, which is three steps higher.



Top: A pair of pilothouse hatches opens to the engine room and the Cummins QSB5.9. A clear panel shields electrical wiring on the forward bulkhead. Above left: The Raymarine navigation system was factory installed in China. Right: The 12VDC breaker swings open to reveal quality electrical work.

A saloon hatch opens to a large storage area. Aluminum diamond plate provides a flat surface for stowing bins. Sight gauges for the fuel and water tanks also are reached via this space.

The 39 has an all-teak interior, with a teak-and-holly sole. Teak panels and cabinetry are finished with seven coats of satin varnish. The teak was expertly cut and fitted and the varnish showed no flaws. Halogen lights are used throughout the boat. Ceiling panels are removable for access to wiring and fixtures.

I climbed the steps to the pilothouse, where there's a helm seat for the pilot and a bench for visitors. The

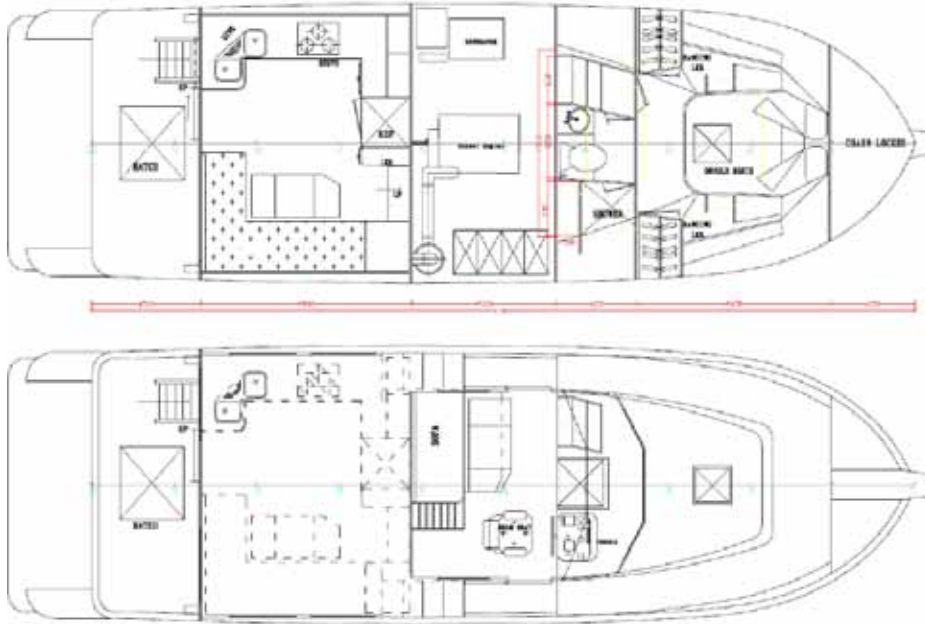
12VDC panel is left of the helm and the 120VAC panel adjoins the stairway. There is space for folded charts, or a chart book, left of the helm and for a navigation system monitor ahead of the wheel. Something special was the teak-rimmed steering wheel. Heavier and thicker than most, it was fitted to stainless steel spokes and obviously was the result of painstaking work by a skilled woodworker. It felt good, too.

Northern Pacific will install Raymarine electronics at the factory and Trevor said nearly all buyers choose that option. Other brands would be installed during post-delivery commissioning.



Instruments for the Cummins QSB5.9 230hp diesel engine are mounted flat at the helm, and reflected light makes it hard to read the tachometer and pressure and temperature gauges from the helm seat. Tilting them slightly with a small teak wedge would correct the problem.

Port and starboard doors lead to the foredeck and steps up to the flybridge. The doors have aluminum frames (as do deck hatches) for strength and rigidity, with a teak panel on the interior and fiberglass outside, a significant upgrade from plywood doors used on early North Pacific trawlers. Stainless steel rails line the decks and exterior



The North Pacific hull is based on venerable CHB styling. The interior layout is traditional, offering good spaces for a cruising couple and occasional guests.

stairs. The rail supports are screwed into aluminum plates embedded in the molded fiberglass deck.

A stairway on the port side of the pilothouse leads below and forward to the boat's stateroom and head. There are four drawers beneath the island berth and two hanging lockers nearby. Below the stateroom deck is the 40-gallon holding tank and valve controls for the washdown system, which can be switched between fresh and sea water. Beneath the berth is a huge storage space and access to the bow thruster.

The head has a separate shower stall. A Corian-surfaced counter surrounds the wash basin. A Tecma electric toilet is standard. A waterproof panel in the shower opens to expose components of the electronic engine control system.

All gear on the boat was standard, from the 5kW Northern Lights generator to a Vetus bow thruster, flybridge, fresh, and saltwater washdown systems, window screens, deck lights, a hot-cold shower in the

aft deck, a 45-pound CQR anchor and 300 feet of 5/16 chain, a 160-ampere alternator on the engine, and a 3,000-watt inverter.

FuHua continues to use traditional fiberglass construction methods. The hull and superstructure are handlaid and the hull is solid fiberglass. Nida-Core thermoplastic honeycomb is used in the deck, which is finished with a nonskid surface.

Fuel and water tanks are fiberglass, while all stuff on deck (rails, stanchions, cleats, chocks, and fill points) is stainless steel. North Pacific has a short list of options. An attractive extra would be substitution of stainless steel window framing for the standard aluminum, at a cost of \$3,500.

THRIFTY RUNNING

While running from Oak Harbor to Anacortes, I tested sound levels and checked fuel consumption over a range of speeds. My conclusion: engine noise is tolerable and doesn't interfere with conversations. This is an efficient boat—at 1700 rpm she was running at 7.6 knots and burning 2.7 gallons of fuel an hour. The sound level was 71 decibels on the A scale.

At 2650 rpm the boat was making 10 knots and the Cummins was burning 11gph. The sound level rose noticeably to 76 decibels.

The North Pacific design provides excellent access to the engine room. A hatch on the port side of the pilothouse opens to one side of the engine and the

generator. The stairway from the saloon lifts to allow entry to the starboard side of the engine and the battery bank.

Steve, Trevor, and I were sitting on the battery boxes and Trevor was ready with a confession. Although the batteries were in covered plastic boxes that sat in frames that would keep them from sliding around, he said the tie-down straps installed at the factory were made of an improper stretchy material. It was clear that a fix had been ordered.

Steve noted that battery boxes need to be ventilated to prevent accumulation of battery gases. Trevor's response was to ask where the ventilators should be placed (ABYC says in the uppermost part of the cover).

North Pacific runs electrical cables and piping through plastic conduit, creating a neat engine room and reducing the likelihood of accidentally tangling with pipes and wires.

Two thoughts popped up as we exited the engine



NORTH PACIFIC 39

LOA	42'
LWL	39'
BEAM	12' 7"
DRAFT	4' 6"
DISPLACEMENT	25,000 lb.
BRIDGE CLEARANCE	13' (arch lowered) 16' (to top of arch)
FUEL	300 U.S. gal.
WATER	200 U.S. gal.
HOLDING TANK	40 U.S. gal.
GENERATOR	5kW Northern Lights
ENGINE	230hp Cummins
CRUISE SPEED	7-8 knots
MAXIMUM SPEED	10.5 knots
RANGE AT CRUISE SPEED	600 miles
DESIGNER	North Pacific Yachts
BUILDER	FuHua
BASE PRICE	\$335,000

For more information:

North Pacific Yachts
#301 17750-65A Avenue
Surrey, B.C.
Canada V3S 5N4
604.377.6650

tbrace@northpacificyachts.com
www.northpacificyachts.com

room under the raised stairway.

First: The stairway teak is darker than other wood on the boat, even though it received the same finish. I think this was an accidental bit of good luck because the darker wood signals to crew, and particularly to guests, that a change in deck level is coming and that might someday prevent a stumble.

Second: While perched on the batteries with the stairway down, we noticed light leaks around the body of the stairs. Hmmm, if light leaks, could sound leak as well? The boat is insulated for noise control, but perhaps a little work on soundproofing the stairway might trim a decibel or two from the noise levels in the pilothouse and saloon.

WHAT IT IS

This boat is a product of a low-overhead business offered at a strongly competitive price. You'll find no granite or marble countertops. There is not a pop-up

TV in the saloon, nor is there a drop-down screen above the master berth. The windows do not have slatted wood blinds that rise and fall in teak channels. She does not have a wine rack holding a dozen bottles. There is not a "summer kitchen" on the flybridge, nor a dishwasher in the galley.

Her owners, Cliff and Amy Cisco, former Hawaii residents and veteran ocean sailors, went looking for a motorboat that fit them as a couple—literally. She is 5 feet, 2 inches tall and he is 6 feet, 1 inch and they were



C-Images.net

One of the most popular North Pacific yachts, the 39 illustrates the builder's focus on continual product improvement.

pleased Trevor made some changes to make them both "fit." Amy, for example, couldn't reach grabrails in the overhead, so Trevor installed others at a height that worked for her.

I watched from atop Cap Sante, which overlooks the public moorage in Anacortes, as the Ciscos took her out of the harbor through an afternoon mist. Cliff later told me that the stability of the boat and good all-around visibility from the helm were comforting.

"We attended several Trawler Fests in Anacortes and we have looked for boats that fit us as a couple. We've chartered (powerboats) and we know what we like," Cliff said later. "The 39 fits our needs perfectly.

"We are very confident in the structure of the boat; the boat feels solid," he adds. "And, it has a really attractive price and value that we can afford." 