



Starting Over

A Liveboard Becomes
A Weekender
Once Again
By David Smalley
Illustrations By Sacha

My wife and I began our powerboating life in a secondhand cuddy cabin boat with a cranky inboard/outboard and a harsh ride. But we got a lot of use out of her, gradually extending our range from our home port of New London, Connecticut, to Watch Hill, Rhode Island, and points in between. We

never ventured across to Long Island, knowing the boat was too small and that we were too inexperienced to safely navigate notorious Plum Gut. We certainly envied dock friends who could overnight in their larger craft.

So we graduated to a slightly bigger boat—a used SeaRay with modest accommodations in her

26-foot length—and we used her a lot. We explored the Connecticut, New York and Rhode Island shorelines, became confirmed weekend cruisers and got to dreaming about “real boating.” We read *PMM* and began to find our cramped spaces, dark cabin and gas-guzzling engine less than satisfactory. Surely a trawler was



A jaunty boat: Rosborough maintains quality by sticking with what they do well—inspiring customer loyalty in the process.

the boat for us, and living aboard was the logical next step.

And so we found our dream boat. After what seemed like the longest rehearsal in maritime history (four years), we moved aboard our Albin 36 trawler, *Surprise*, in January 2001 and lived aboard until April of that same year.

REALITY HITS

It turned out that we didn't like it very much. Oh, the planning and dreaming had been wonderful, our scheme to fund our dream by putting the boat into charter had worked out financially, we had made wonderful friends in our new home port of Tarpon Springs, Florida, and we had gotten to know the boat really well. But along with living aboard came a major time burden that others had told

us about and that we had ignored—endless maintenance.

We had blithely skipped right over all those “how to fix it” articles and gone directly to the “drinks on the flybridge” stories. Surely there'd be time to fix things and cruise as well, right? Well, in our case, no. I'm a sculptor, used to mechanical things and usually able to fix them. I'm trained to turn my dreams into reality...in the studio. But apparently not on boats. We were caught in a waking dream of equipment fixes, upgrades, deferred and cancelled trips, and frustration, and we finally ran out of energy and options.

SIZE DOES MATTER

Reluctantly, we sold our boat. We had forgotten Smalley's Inverse Ratio of Size and Use (the smaller the boat, the more

hours you will use her). Just ask kayakers, rowers, canoe paddlers and the people buzzing around harbors in their dinghies and small sailboats. Of course, we immediately wanted another boat. And she had to be a trawler. Just the smallest, simplest trawler we could find.

Just what is a trawler, anyway? For us, it is a boat that devotes a large percentage of her overall capacity to the comfort and convenience of her owners. That is, she's quiet, smooth riding, not flashy, economical to operate and has some working boat heritage.

We knew our next boat would be smaller and simpler than *Surprise*. If we could afford it, she would be new—brand new. More speed would be a good thing, especially for day trips and outings of 20 to 40 miles, the sort of boating we did in the

SeaRay. As a trawler she would be economical to run and quiet, and would have a shallow draft. She'd be easy to transport by land so we could enjoy her in Florida in the winter and in Connecticut in the summer. She would have to be salty and traditional looking. She would have accommodations for four, which would mean reasonably civilized onboard room for two.

LOOKING FOR LOVE

We'd actually been aboard just such a boat, on one of our infrequent cruises in *Surprise*. Who made that little trawler we saw at Captiva Island? The name came back to us—she was a Rosborough 246 Sedan Cruiser, a pocket trawler made in Nova Scotia. She was about 25 feet long, had many different engine options, an enclosed head and optional shower, the V-berth had standing headroom and the main cabin was



Connecticut River. *Nancy Ann* was a revelation. With the bracket-mounted four-stroke, she was quiet and civilized under way. Her handling was predictable, and she accelerated smoothly up to a comfortable

incredibly light and airy—with a basic galley and convertible dinette. Rosborough does not have dealers, but when we called the factory they sent us the names of owners living near us in Connecticut who would be happy to show us their boats.

We called Jim and Nancy Long, whose Rosborough *Nancy Ann* has a Yamaha 115hp four-stroke outboard and is fitted out very much like the hypothetical boat we had been discussing. Jim and Nancy had just launched their boat for the season at a marina fairly close to our home and were happy to show her off and let us drive her on the

cruising speed of 14 knots and a top speed of nearly 20 mph. Her owners reported fuel consumption averaging around 3 gph. We could cruise economically but get to distant locales easily.

With a draft of less than 2 feet, she would be a fine boat for gunkholing—she could even be beached on a sandy shore. With a beam of 8 feet 6 inches, she could be hauled on a conventional trailer without the need for special permits. The Longs love their boat and produce an interesting and informative newsletter on the Rosborough called *Anchor Watch*—and through the newsletter and an active online

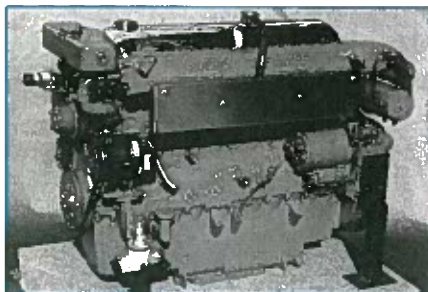
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owners' forum, the boat is gaining modest "cult" status.

After another call to the factory in Halifax, Brian Trefry, the marketing manager, arranged to stop by our house and show us a boat he was bringing to a boat show and then on to its owner. The finish on this brand-new boat was excellent. Despite her workboat lines she had nicely crafted interior teak trim, which added warmth to her rugged, Downeast character. We were in love (again). Brian said he'd stop by on his way to another boat show in a few weeks. We climbed aboard the boat and signed a contract.

Our Rosborough was scheduled for fall 2001 construction and delivery to us in Tarpon Springs in January 2002. We went through catalogs looking at the electronics we would need—just a VHF radio, depth sounder and GPS, in keeping with our newfound KISS philosophy (Keep It Simple, Stupid). We went to the factory in July and met Bob Rosborough, who has made such a success of his little trawler.

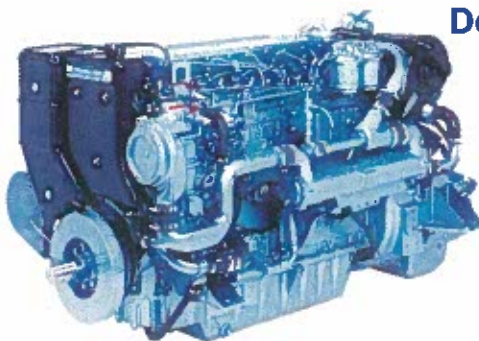
A BOAT THAT MAKES YOU SMILE

Bob is a second-generation boatbuilder. His father, James Douglas Rosborough, began the family business building traditional wooden sailing boats in Nova Scotia in the '50s. The 246 comes in several styles, with the trawler-like Sedan Cruiser being the most popular. In addition to the Sedan Cruiser, Rosborough makes a model used by the Canadian Fisheries Conservation and Protection Enforcement Department, and a Custom Wheelhouse model with a larger cockpit. They have recently added a hull form with an additional 4 inches of freeboard, adding height to all the interior spaces. All models have a strongly upswept sheer to a high bow and a nearly vertical stem—shapes that are familiar on Downeast and Nova Scotia workboats and work beautifully when scaled down. The boats have a jaunty look, not cute exactly, but purposeful and willing. They make folks smile. Owner loyalty is legendary, due in no small part to the personal care that Bob

and Brian and the rest of the Rosborough crew give to their boats and customers. It's an old formula, and it works.

The company produces about 45 of the Sedan Cruisers a year, a number that has been steadily increasing. Depending on options and power choices, a Sedan Cruiser can be purchased for little more than U.S.\$60,000, or up to around U.S.\$100,000. Rosborough has designed and built a larger trawler, the Atlantic 35, but has shelved production for the present because of the high demand for the smaller vessels.

Their boats are produced at two facilities. The laminating and basic assembly is done at Murphy's Cove, about an hour from the finishing plant in Halifax, where the assembled boats are completed. The finishing plant, which also is the location of the company's offices, is a new building, spotless and well organized. A skilled team of individuals who do the plumbing and wiring, finish the interior, and install the engines and owners' options, chosen from an extensive list,



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completes each boat. And if the owner wants something installed that isn't a standard option, the factory will try everything, within reason, to accommodate him or her. But like Henry Ford with the Model T, you can have any color you want, so long as it's the standard off-white. Exterior color accents and a variety of interior fabrics are available.

Bob Rosborough told me that the high quality comes from doing the things they do well, and not stretching themselves too thin. Changes are incremental; the basic design hasn't changed in years,

but refinements are constant. Installations of bracket-mounted, four-stroke outboard engines are now more common; a few years ago inboard/outboard gas or diesel were more popular. But choices abound—power from about 50hp to 200hp is available.

At the factory there was no sense of hurry; the workers knew what they were doing and went about their work with quiet confidence. Most of the company's 33 workers are long-term employees—no small accomplishment in the current labor market. The quality of the fiberglass work is impressive,

and the boats are flawlessly prepared for delivery. It's easy to see why virtually all their sales come from customer referrals and every boat shown at a boat show is pre-sold and delivered to its new owners after the show is over.

OUR LAST BOAT... FOR NOW

As we rejoin the ranks of boaters who don't live aboard, we are excited about the potential our new boat offers. Our experience has reinforced what we already knew—that a boat will be a part of our lives for as long as we can manage. We've had the Rosborough for a



David Smalley



The Smalleys aboard the pocket trawler that captured their hearts.

friend with a big truck, we use her in both of our home ports, getting a nine- or 10-month boating season in the bargain.

Two trawlers captured our affection. Their hull forms were derived from working boats, and each was designed with comfort and economy of operation in mind. The Albin is the embodiment of the traditional trawler: built in the fuel-

year now, and despite a windier than normal winter in Florida and some uncomfortable weather in New England last summer, she's been a stout performer. We can cruise her comfortably in rough water at 12 knots, and when things smooth out a bit, we can open her up to a WOT of 19 knots. Our Sedan Cruiser is equipped with a Mercury 115hp four-stroke, which was developed in partnership with Yamaha. The power heads are the same, but the Merc carries a three-year warranty, despite her installation in a Canadian vessel.

We are constantly asked to give informal tours—her distinctive looks make her a standout among the Euro-style go-fasts at crowded anchorages and marinas. At this writing we are arranging for her trip back to Florida. With a trailer and a

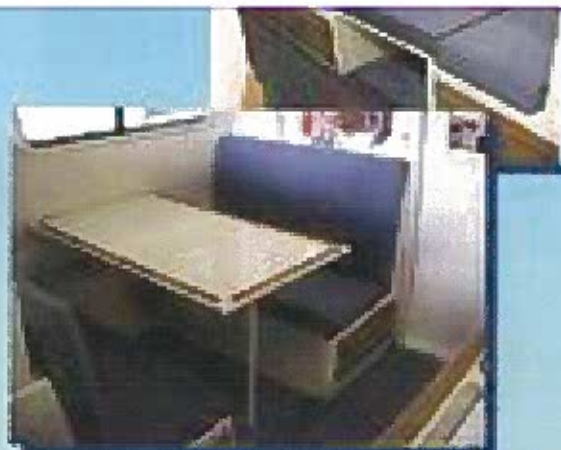
starved '70s and on into the '80s to provide her owners with a steady, roomy and economical boat. The Rosborough is a trawler on a diet: suited to a somewhat faster pace of life but simple, economical and comfortable, with the traditional style that makes trawlers so popular. Ahh, we loved them both, but needs change and we admit to being somewhat fickle. (In the United States, the average length of time one owns a boat before selling and getting another is three years.) It turns out we fit the Rosborough demographic almost perfectly: Her typical owners are in their 60s and have owned several boats before, and their Rosborough is smaller than their previous boats. Owners refer to their Rosboroughs as their last boats, and we can see why. For now.

Builder's Comments

The RF-246 is designed and constructed for ultimate stability and versatility. The stable, seaworthy, Atlantic hull provides safety, comfort, and economical ease of operation.

The accommodation areas provide spacious cruising and/or living aboard operation.

The helm and control center offers adequate areas for navigation and electronics, with maximum all round visibility through large windows, and easy accessibility to the deck, through the transom door.



Construction methods and materials used in the RF-246 ensure minimum maintenance and maximum longevity and durability. All integral framing and bulkheads etc. are molded fiberglass with only the best materials and all fastening and assembly is with high grade stainless steel and quality marine adhesives.

Interior finish is in keeping with the no-maintenance construction and beige finish warmly accented by oak moldings and trim provide a pleasant and bright atmosphere.

Traditional characteristics such as:

- fully enclosed wheelhouse or cabin cruiser
- roof hatch over bridge windows
- self draining cockpit
- safety hand rails
- bow pulpit railing
- large walk around decks and nooks with non-slip surface, provide safe, enjoyable boating whether you're 30 miles at sea or gunholing the coast or cruising the canals and lakes.



Rochborough Boats Ltd. and our competent staff of quality craftsmen take pride in providing each of our RF-246 owners a quality craft which will prove to be an investment in boating enjoyment.

Bob Rochborough