

USED BOAT

BY STEVE KNAUTH

Bertram 28 Flybridge



The boat looked like hell. After two and a half years on the hard, it was filthy. The plywood cabin doors were falling off their hinges. The tops of the Ford inboards were rusted from dripping water. The cabin was damp and moldy. And it was just the boat Steve Rodstrom was looking for: a 1977 Bertram 28 Flybridge Cruiser.

It was 1993, and the young Rodstrom family of five was outgrowing their 24-foot Performer. "I was living in Larchmont, New York, and I'd been watching this boat just sitting there year after year," says Rodstrom, 56, a Deep River, Connecticut, broker with Prestige Yacht Sales in Essex, Connecticut. "It looked like a mess, but really it was in good shape. It wasn't scratched, the wiring was good, and it was all original. Nothing had been changed or added."

The 28-footer fit the bill for a growing family. The Bertram has a family-size cockpit, a

complete and compact galley for cruising, and an enclosed stand-up head, as well as a V-berth forward and a convertible dinette in the main cabin. With its size, speed and range, the Rodstroms would be able to broaden their cruising horizons, too.

As for the Bertram reputation for seaworthiness, the boat "spoke for itself," Rodstrom says. "When I was younger, our family owned a boatyard, and one of the customers had a 31 Bertram he commuted to New York in," he says. "I admired that boat. I ran it a lot for him, and I always felt that if you want to get somewhere in confidence, you need a boat like that."

The asking price was \$50,000, but the final price was considerably lower, says Rodstrom. "He had basically given up the boat. I got a good deal."

During their 21 years of ownership, the family has made the most of the vessel. The



three kids have grown up on the Bertram, cruising from Maine to New York, day tripping, fishing, becoming boaters themselves. Family memories revolve around the Bertram. "With the 24, I would drive the boat to a destination, and the rest of the family would come up by car," says Rodstrom. "We were on [the Bertram] together."

They spent a dozen summers exploring the coast of Maine, and Rodstrom also made regular trips from Connecticut to fish in the Gulf of Maine. "Blue shark, bottom fishing on the ledges for cod and haddock — it was a highlight of the year," he says. "And we always came home with a bunch of pictures and good memories." He even had the boat trucked to Florida once. "It's an easy boat for that. You can put it on a truck without dismantling it."

Two years ago, Rodstrom embarked on a complete upgrade that took 18 months and reached into just about every corner of the boat. "I basically changed everything," says Rodstrom, who did almost all of the work. New engines, transmissions, through-hulls, wiring, canvas, upholstery, trim tab motors, batteries,



Steve Rodstrom

SPECIFICATIONS

LOA: 28 feet, 6 inches

BEAM: 11 feet

DRAFT: 2 feet, 8 inches

WEIGHT: 12,000 pounds

HULL TYPE: deep-vee

PROPULSION: twin 230-hp inboards

TANKAGE: 185 gallons fuel (original), 40 gallons water

BUILDER: Bertram Yacht, Miami. bertram.com

battery switches, cables, head, fridge, tanks (water, holding, fuel), hoses, compass. "There's not much I haven't changed."

The result is a boat that looks as if it came off the showroom floor. "Keeping it original-looking is important," says Rodstrom. "That's part of what sparked my interest when I bought the boat. It's like looking at a nice old car — it doesn't have mag wheels and stickers on the bumper."

MerCruiser 383s replaced the original Ford 351 gas engines — they're about the same size as the Fords but pack an additional 110 hp. Top end is 36 or 37 knots at 5,100 rpm; cruising speed is 22 knots at 3,000 rpm, a 4- to 6-knot improvement, says Rodstrom.

The boat was relaunched last July, giving him a few months to settle in with the new gear. It was all worthwhile, says Rodstrom, who looks ahead to more years of boating with the family Bertram. "By doing what I did, this boat will keep me going where I want to go for as long as I own it."

BACKGROUND

The story is well-known. In 1960, a 31-foot powerboat with Raymond Hunt's new deep-vee hull won the grueling Miami-Nassau race. Yachtsman Dick Bertram was among the three-man crew who set a record despite terrible sea conditions. A year later, the Bertram 31 debuted at the New York boat show with much praise. By 1971, Miami-based Bertram Yacht had sold its 1,000th boat. During that year the Bertram 28 Flybridge Cruiser was introduced, and it went on to become the most successful design of all, with 2,200 boats sold in a 24-year run. The 28 Flybridge Cruiser is readily found on the used-boat market. Prices run as low as \$12,000 to \$14,000, but most models cost \$30,000 to \$40,000. Top prices are about \$70,000.

Walkthrough

Touting its versatility and seaworthiness, the Powerboat Guide calls the Bertram 28 Flybridge Cruiser the "best 28-footer ever built." One of Bertram's more popular models, it was upgraded and modernized three times during its 24-year production run. The basics did not change much. Standard power was a pair of 230-hp gas inboards mounted under engine boxes amidships, convenient for maintenance. The rest of the large cockpit could be devoted to fishing, diving or socializing.

The flybridge is accessed by a cockpit

ladder, and it's laid out with a bench seat and centerline helm station. Below, there are accommodations for four in the simple but functional cabin. The V-berth has a hanging locker to starboard and an overhead hatch. Moving aft, the galley is to port, with the original design calling for an under-counter refrigerator and a sink. A stove top was later added. The enclosed, stand-up head compartment is abaft the galley; a shower was included in later models. A dinette to starboard, with bench seating, converts to a bunk. Large windows let in air and light. ■