

USED POWERBOATS

MAINSHIP 34: A NO-NONSENSE FAMILY CRUISER

Born in '70s oil crises, the Lubrs brothers' fuel-efficient gem really bit the mark

By John Wooldridge

When the fuel crisis hit in the early 1970s, sales of large motoryachts and sedan cruisers with gasoline engines suffered noticeably. Trawlers, meanwhile, grew in popularity.

So John and Warren Luhrs, who started Silverton in 1969, launched Mainship in the mid-1970s. Anticipating the next fuel crisis, they designed and built a fuel-efficient family cruiser.

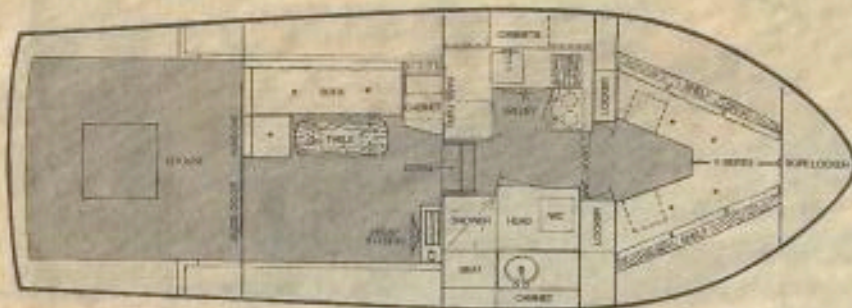
The designer of record, John Cherubini, who designed the first Hunter 25 sailboat with Warren Luhrs, drew lines for a classic-looking, Down East-style flybridge sedan cruiser that embodied the spacious accommodations and semi-displacement fuel efficiency more common to long-range diesel trawlers.

"The first Mainship 34 hit the water in 1977 — about a year before the next big fuel crunch," says Chip Shea, marketing director for Luhrs Marine Group, which includes Mainship, Silverton, Luhrs and Hunter. Built for Mainship by its parent company, Silverton Marine of Toms River, N.J., the first boat cruised at 12 knots during its sea trials, with a top speed of 15 knots.

Make it roomy



By the time production stopped in 1988, about 900 Mainship 34s were afloat around North America.



The Mainship 34 has room for two couples or a family of four, a large galley with plenty of storage and a spacious cockpit for fishing or deck chairs.

backing down and docking from inside a more pleasant task. Sliding screened windows along the side, plus an opening deck hatch forward and opening ports for the forward cabin, galley, and head compartment, help with ventilation. An optional genset and air conditioning are found on some boats, Shea says.

The 34's typical sedan layout has a large main cabin on the same level as the cockpit. Measuring 10 by 9 feet, the main saloon has space for a sofa, chair, adjustable table and built-in cabinet. And with 6 feet, 3 inches of headroom, even lanky boat writers like yours truly can walk tall.

To port and two steps down, you'll find a U-shaped galley with good storage above and below, a modest-sized refrigerator and an alcohol/electric range. Countertop space is plentiful. To starboard, an enclosed head compartment offers a separate shower stall with seat, a marine head facing aft and a vanity with sink and mirror. Behind the woven wood-and-fabric door, the forward cabin has twin hanging lockers, a large vee-berth with filler cushion and access to the rope locker.

The Mainship 34 was constructed according to accepted industry standards, with fully fiberglass-encapsulat-

knuckle and runs to a point just ahead from the cockpit. An additional grab

The Luhrs brothers asked Cherubin for a comparatively narrow, easily driven hull that could be efficiently powered by a 160-hp Perkins diesel. They needed a very comfortable, functional layout that served multiple uses. They also wanted room for two couples or a family of four, a large galley with plenty of storage and a spacious cockpit for fishing or a flock of deck chairs.

The Mainship 34 launched a small family of trawler-like cruiser designs that would eventually include 36- and 40-footers. By the time production stopped in 1988, more than 1,300 were afloat around North America — particularly in the Pacific Northwest, Northeast and Chesapeake Bay. Mainship 34s accounted for about 900 of them, says Shea. Besides being known as the Mainship 34, this boat was also marketed as the Nantucket 34 and as the Mainship II Motor Cruiser.

They're still no-nonsense, low-maintenance, compact long-distance cruisers. They have enough storage to handle weekend or weeklong cruises. And they can also satisfy snowbirds, who take longer cruises when the seasons start to change.

I always liked the looks of this boat. There's a wonderful, springy sheer forward and a well-flared bow for punching into head seas. Below the waterline, the forward sections show a fairly deep, slightly raked bow and a sharp entry. There is a full keel that starts where the stem turns aft at a distinct

of the propshaft, providing protection to the running gear and enhanced tracking. The broad, flat after sections have rounded bilges and a four-degree deadrise for increased side-to-side stability and good lift at higher speeds.

As little as 2 gph

Standard power is the 160-hp Perkins, with an optional 200-hp Perkins on later models for an extra three knots. Cruising at 10 to 11 knots, the standard Perkins burns about 6 gallons per hour. At displacement cruise speeds of seven to eight knots, the Mainship's fuel-efficient 160-hp diesel burns a miserly 2 gph. The Mainship 34 at eight knots has a cruising range of about 900 miles based on 200 gallons of its 220-gallon fuel capacity.

On all the Mainship 34s I've seen, the transom always has been solid, although there are optional platforms available for those who don't mind swinging their legs over the caprail when swimming or boarding. The cockpit measures 8 by 10 feet. Coamings are thigh-high for security, with dedicated storage under for rods, nets and gaffs. Hawse holes give access to large aft cleats mounted inside the cockpit and help keep the coamings free of snags for anglers.

Sidedecks are wide enough for passengers to walk comfortably but there are no steps in the forward cockpit corners. Good handholds are located all along the way, save for the first step up

at this point would be a wise choice. The stainless-steel bow rail has a pulpit extension over the self-storing platform forward to help provide additional security for those on anchor duty. Atop the cabin trunk, a short Kenyon spar is mounted and braced against the flybridge overhang forward, providing a mounting point for optional equipment like radomes, VHF antennas, and spreader lights.

The ladder to the flybridge is on the centerline, sometimes leading up through an overhead deck. The original 34 has an extension of the flybridge deck that covers the aft cockpit. In 1979, the 34 II was equipped with a shorter version of this same structure, while the 34 III eliminated it around 1983 in favor of a more open cockpit. There was plenty of room on the upper aft deck of earlier models for a small dinghy, but at that time most were heavier, fiberglass dinks, not inflatables. Often dinks were stored upside down on the foredeck, or tilted up on the transom platform. For the most part, the upper aft deck adds seating and sunbathing space.

A good lower helm

The boat has a modest-sized upper helm, as well as a complete lower station for protection from the elements. The visibility below is excellent, except for the two areas created by the aft pillars supporting the flybridge. A sliding glass door to starboard, in addition to the large glass aft bulkhead window, helps make

co marine plywood through the glass laminates in the hull. The deck and cabin structure are reinforced with Baltek balsa coring for stiffness and light weight, and some marine plywood where hardware is fastened or additional structural strength is required. The hull-to-deck joint is a typical shoebox construction, with an outside overlap sealed with 3M 5200 bedding compound and fastened with stainless-steel screws.

Changing with the times

As the fuel crises of the late 1970s and early 1980s subsided, Mainship moved from traditional semi-displacement style cruisers to faster, Euro-style designs. With the baby boomers aging, the company is focusing on designs that stress increased comfort and livability rather than speed. A growing number of mature owners want to go cruising again, in boats that are affordable, spacious and efficient to operate and maintain. Mainship's new 350 Trawler and 300 Pilot are the latest appearances of a concept that made the Mainship 34 a success.

"Mainship 34s are very popular in this part of the world," says Jason Weil, a broker for Specialty Yacht Sales in Vancouver, British Columbia. "Their owners tend to hang onto them, though. We haven't listed one for a while. The last one I saw sell here was a private sale of a well-kept boat for \$95,000 Canadian, or about \$68,000 U.S."

But in the United States, the 34s' turnover is high, says Doug Buchheit, sales manager for Steve Lazarus Yacht Sales in Stuart, Fla.

"They've held up pretty well over the years, for a variety of reasons," he says. "The Mainship 34 is one of the few trawlers with no exterior teak. For the dollars involved, they offered a tremendous value in a market dominated by more expensive competitors."

Few builders matched the Mainship 34's efficiency, says Buchheit.

Smallest of the breed

"The Mainship was the smallest of the U.S.-built trawlers in a world of long-distance cruisers that were mainly imports," he says. In the United States, only Gulfstar and Heritage had comparable models. "They were all larger and heavier than the Mainship 34, and usually equipped with twin diesel engines," Buchheit adds.

Economy-minded boaters looking for something from \$40,000 to \$60,000 are a perfect match for the 34, says Buchheit.

"Current asking prices for well-kept boats are often close to the original owners' purchase price," he says.

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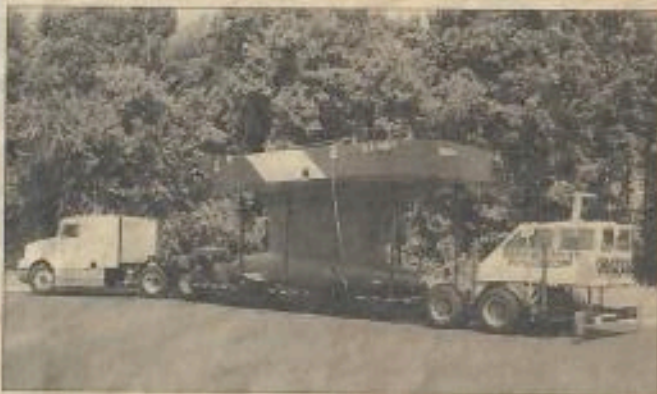
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new owners are getting for the price represents a very good value. And they're remarkably easy to sell. Sedan-style boats are more popular with some people, particularly mature couples with cruising plans."

Obviously, the Mainship 34 is still a unique cruiser — popular, too.

There are owners' clubs in New Jersey, British Columbia and Maryland. The Kent Island, Md., club has more than 200 members. Faced with the costs of newer long-distance cruisers in today's market, chances are good that the supply of Mainship 34s will never keep up with the demand.

And if you're betting against another fuel crunch as a factor in your next boat purchase, remember the lines at the fuel dock, the talk of rationing and the legislation concerning government-controlled petroleum industries. Fuel-efficient cruisers never looked better.

SPECIFICATIONS

- LOA:** 34 feet
- BEAM:** 11 feet, 4 inches
- DRAFT:** 2 feet, 10 inches
- DISPLACEMENT:** 14,000 pounds
- FRESHWATER CAPACITY:** 50 gallons
- FUEL CAPACITY:** 220 gallons
- BASE POWER:** Single Perkins 160-hp diesel

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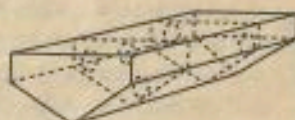
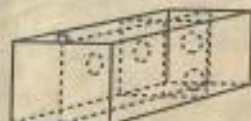
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