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A pocket cruiser with a lot of friends



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By Peter Bohr

OK, what's the trick? The specs sheet clearly states the Flicka is exactly 20 feet long from stem to stern, 24 feet if you count the outboard rudder and the bowsprit. And the boat will comfortably fit into a 25 foot slip, the smallest and cheapest most marinas have to offer.

And with its eight foot beam, the boat will fit on a trailer, too. The Flicka's mainsail is on 113 square feet and its jib only 137 square feet, which means it can be singlehanded almost as easily as a Sabot.

But come on, now. What 20-footer displaces 5,500 pounds and carries 1,800 pounds of lead ballast? What 20-footer can carry 1,500 pounds worth of people and gear without water gushing over the gunwales?

The Flicka, of course. Its other features are equally impressive. Inside, there is a six foot, four inch V-berth and an equal size quarter

berth. There's also a settee and an optional enclosed head compartment.

The full galley has a deep stainless steel sink, a large icebox, a two-burner stove and a fold-away dining table that seats three. The forward locker is cavernous and there is a spacious cockpit locker and a hanging locker. There are bookshelves. There are food and dish storage lockers above the galley, and

drawers and storage lockers below the galley. There are yet more lockers and bins under every berth.

Most astounding of all is that this 20-footer has nearly six feet of headroom.

Lest you think such a craft has all the grace and style of a house trailer, the Flicka is pretty enough to turn heads in any anchorage. The Flicka is, as some have said, a pocket cruiser that everyone wants to put in his or her pocket and take home.

So just how did Bruce Bingham, Flicka's designer, pull off this sleight of hand? First of all, he based his design on a proven turn-of-the-century New England sailing workboat called a Newport. Newports were full-bodied boats with long keels and good carrying capacity that served the lobstermen off Block Island Sound.

Second, he gave both the deck and the top of the house a very pronounced crown, which adds room below. Third, he put minimal bulkheads inside the cabin to keep the space open. Finally, he incorporated many space-saving details, like the stove that's turned sideways to save room in the galley.

When Bingham designed the Flicka he clearly understood an axiom known to many wise and experienced yacht owners - that the pleasure derived from a boat is inverse to its size. Or put another way, big boats require big expenditures of money, time and effort, which doesn't necessarily add up to big fun.



The Pacific Seacraft Flicka offers a spacious interior, a full galley and nearly six feet of headroom. But since it is built on a 20 foot hull, it is a cruiser that can be singlehanded with ease.

Of course the problem is that little boats, especially as little as 20 feet aren't usually good for much more than daysailing. But the Flicka, with her unusual accommodations, is different. She's a world cruiser for those of modest means.

"The person who doesn't have a lot of money, but is serious about cruising is the person closest to my heart," said Henry Mohrschladt, president of Pacific Seacraft in Fullerton, California, Flicka's builder.

During the last decade, Mohrschladt and his partner, Michael Howarth, have turned Pacific Seacraft into what Fortune Magazine last year called "the maker of America's best sailboats 37 feet and under." And the Flicka had a great deal to do with their accomplishment.

"Flicka means Pacific Seacraft to a lot of people," Mohrschladt said. Today the company builds five bluewater cruisers in addition to the Flicka: the Dana 24, Orion 27, Pacific Seacraft 31, Crealock 34 and Crealock 37. Although the Flicka accounts for only 15 or so of the more than 100 boats Pacific Seacraft builds each year, she was the company's first big success and remains its most popular model to date, as Flicka production nears the 400 mark.

To be sure, the Flicka isn't exactly cheap if compared to other 20-footers. With a few goodies from the extremely comprehensive option list, such as a tri-color masthead light with strobe, teak deck, and non-standard hull color, a 1989 Flicka sails away for nearly \$45,000.

Which raises another question. For that kind of money why not buy a real 30-footer instead of a 20-footer hiding in a 20-footer's hull? "Because the Flicka is the cheapest boat you can buy and take offshore with confidence," Mohrschladt answered.

Along with standing headroom, a full galley and all the rest, the Flicka's level of quality is something else you don't expect to find on a 20 footer. Her hand-laid fiberglass hull is three-eights of an inch thick at the sheer, at least five-eights of an inch below the waterline and more than three-fourths of an inch at the keel. The plywood-cored, molded deck is secured to the hull with a double flange, polyurethane bedding and stainless steel bolts. A fiberglass interior liner, bonded to the hull, adds even more strength to the boat.

The Flicka's interior is as finely fitted as that on any yacht of any size. There are no exposed fiberglass surfaces. The cabin sole is covered with teak and holly. The overhead is beautifully upholstered with a vinyl liner, thoughtfully zippered for access to the bolts for equipment fastened to the cabin top. The cabin is filled with solid Burma teak joinery. No nails

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are used; everything is screwed and plugged. The teak is all hand sanded and finished.

Much of the boat's hardware is bronze, "the most durable marine material. The artifacts from sunken galleons are bronze," Mohrschladt said.

Many fittings are the proprietary design of Pacific Seacraft, including the handsome opening portlights in the cabin. The rigging is sturdy stainless steel with forged bronze turnbuckles. The mast is stepped in a stainless steel tabernacle.

All the Flicka's through-hull fittings are bronze and massive enough for a 40-footer. The huge outboard rudder, which also looks like it belongs on a far larger boat, is made of fiberglass with oak cheeks, cap and tiller and hung with heavy bronze gudgeons and pintles.

In short-no pun intended-the Flicka is a showpiece of craftsmanship. "A friend of mine bought a Flicka," Mohrschladt said. "It's probably been in the water twice. He keeps it on a trailer in his garage where he says he can admire it."

Mohrschladt's buddy isn't the norm among Flicka owners. Undoubtedly the Flicka fleet has its share of dreamers, owners who would like to sail the seven seas, but who will never spend much more than three-day weekend aboard. However, Pacific Seacraft's files are filled with correspondence from faraway lands, sent by Flicka owners who have actually realized their cruising dreams.

"Flicka owners are often, uh, independent types," Howarth said. One Flicka buyer showed up at the factory after driving from Minnesota to pick up his boat. He and his girlfriend intended to load it with a few "farm animals," and then sail to an island in the South Atlantic where they were going to set up a homestead. The fellow paid for his Flicka with gold coins.

Cruising owners have reported making passages in impressive times. "People have averaged 5 & 1/2 knots for days on

end," Mohrschladt said. "At first, we took the reports with a grain of salt. If you look at the theoretical hull speed it doesn't seem possible. But there have been many reports."

Despite her hull configuration and displacement, the Flicka moves smartly in light air, though she's not meant for racing around the buoys. But she really comes into her element in adverse conditions where her heavy displacement and relatively wide beam give her inherent stability. Her long keel also makes her easy to steer, reducing fatigue on long voyages.

If everything but the price tag of a new Flicka appeals to you, you're not out of luck. There seems to be a small but steady supply of used Flickas on the market, some priced at just under \$20,000.

Bingham originally designed the Flicka for amateur builders, but back yard-built boats aren't too common. Pacific Seacraft began building the boat in 1977, and for several years offered the boat in various stages of construction. Today the company only sells completed boats.

Though the vast majority of Flickas are sloop rigged, Pacific Seacraft originally offered a gaff-rig option, and now offers a cutter-rig option. Today a nine horsepower Yanmar diesel inboard is standard. But most of the early Flickas use outboards for auxiliary power.

"At first, we tried to keep the price as low as possible," Mohrschladt said. "The base price was \$10,000 in 1977 and the boat was quite spartan. The boat is so much better now. The integrity of the hull has never changed, but the details of the carpentry, the mechanical installation and so on are much improved."

But no matter its age or equipment, a Flicka is a little boat with a very big heart.

Pacific Seacraft Flicka

Design

LOA	24 ft.
LWL	18 ft. 2"
Beam	8 ft.
Draft	3 ft. 3 "
Sail Area	250 sq. ft.
Displacement	5,500 lbs.
Ballast	1,800 lbs.

Prices

New	Fully equipped, \$45,000
Typical used boat asking prices	
\$18,000-\$40,000	

Pacific Seacraft



The Dream of Distant Shores is Central to the Design of Every Pacific Seacraft Yacht.

John Welch and Betty Jane (Flicka #188) have logged over 10,000 ocean miles together, and the lure of the sea is as strong as ever. His passages include Newport to Hawaii, Hawaii to Tahiti and return, Hawaii to Palmyra and return.

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