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Not Just a Pretty Boat

We would be quick to include the new Fathom 40 "expedition yacht" on a short list of significant new vessels recently introduced by Pacific NW builders. Fathom 40s are built in Sedro-Woolley by a company established and staffed primarily with experienced craftspeople formerly associated with highly respected regional trademarks. Founding partners include Ric Reid (formerly president of a well-known tug builder), John Greene, and Tracy Prescott. Fathom 40s will be marketed throughout North America, but the general design seems perfectly adapted to weekend and vacation cruising in the most popular areas of Washington and British Columbia. Summertime coastal cruising north to Alaska or south to Baja should be realistic as well. There has been a steady "buzz" in the marketplace ever since production of this boat began early in 2007.

Fathom Yachts has appointed Passage Maker Yachts of Seattle as the Pacific NW dealer, and we took eager advantage of an opportunity to spend a morning with Passage Maker's David Irvine aboard hull . Dave is a professional yacht broker with many, many years of experience. Like the rest of the crew at Passage Maker Yachts, he is a credit to the brokerage industry and a pleasure to deal with.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

The Fathom 40 was designed by naval architect Greg Marshall. Marshall has extensive experience designing high-quality vessels, and other NW boats among his impressive portfolio of successful designs include



Fathom 40. Photo by Tracy Prescott

the Westport 130, Westport 112, and the 50 West Bay. Built for the realities of the 21st century, fuel efficiency was highly prioritized. CAD technology was employed to create an exceptionally efficient hull, and at first impression the Fathom 40 seems to fall into the "pilothouse trawler/workboat" design category. The lines are more refined than one would expect on a traditional trawler, and Fathom Yachts refers to the 40 as an "expedition yacht."

A high bow, proud pilothouse with traditional flybridge cowling, and a broad boat deck extending over the cockpit are primary

SPECIFICATIONS & DIMENSIONS

LOA: 40'4"
LWL: 36'1"
Beam: 14'6"
Draft: 42"
Displacement: 24,000 lb
Fuel: 400 g
Water: 135 g
Holding tank (grey): 45 g
Holding tank (black): 45 g

design elements. There is generous freeboard along the entire length, and the transom is rounded in a manner reminiscent of more traditional, full displacement hulls.

One of the more innovative features of the Fathom 40 is the drop-down transom. There is no traditional swim step, but when docked or anchored the majority of the transom hinges to a horizontal position flush with the aft deck to effectively create one. Boarding is excep-

tionally easy when tied stern to, and this arrangement is likely to prove very popular among boaters who participate in yacht club or power squadron rendezvous.

The main cabin of the Fathom 40 extends almost beam to beam, leaving only 10.5 inches walkways alongside. This design decision maximizes space in the salon and galley, but suggests that during heavy weather of any sort most prudent deckhands will be more comfortable tending fenders from the security of the boat deck. Access to the boat deck and flybridge is up a molded set of steps from the cockpit. The steps are hinged, and the lower section lifts up to reveal walk-in access to a systems compartment, with a watertight door to the engine room immediately beyond.

Fathom 40 yachts are single-engine vessels utilizing semi-displacement hulls with large rudders and pronounced keels.

CONSTRUCTION

New yacht building companies enjoy a specific advantage: there is no heavy, unamortized investment in "old" technology and every aspect of the construction process can be as up-to-date as technically possible.

Clockwise from top right:
Salon features the warm
ambience of a luxury yacht
and comforts normally
associated with larger boats.

Uniquely configured
pilothouse features a chart
table and excellent sightlines.

Master stateroom features a
comfortable berth and plenty
of stowage.

Guest stateroom can be
enjoyed by kids or adults, and
is well finished.

Well-appointed galley is
convenient to staterooms,
salon, and pilothouse.

Photos by Tracy Prescott



The Fathom 40 uses an advanced infused lamination construction process to maximize strength without piling on excess weight. Materials are placed in a mold, and the dry lay-up is sealed with a plastic bag. Pumps create a negative atmospheric pressure inside the bag before resin is drawn into the laminate through a series of strategically placed tubes and channels. The laminated pieces have a more ideal resin-to-fiber ratio than will typically result from hand-rolled or chopper gun techniques. Most of the older techniques result in hulls that include excessive resin, adding weight without adding strength. In some cases, excessive resin actually weakens the structural integrity of the finished part.

Four major bulkheads are used to create watertight compartments and provide structural support for the house and deck. The hull below the waterline is solid, infused FRP. Above the waterline, Core-Cell coring is used to improve rigidity and sound attenuation.

ENGINE ROOM

The engine room of the Fathom 40 is one of the more thoughtful designs in the 40-foot category. Entry is through a watertight door, from a systems compartment with full standing headroom under the flybridge steps. While there isn't anything close to standing headroom around the engine itself, the beamy character of the Fathom 40 hull leaves plenty of service space around the standard 425-hp Cummins QSB main engine and a generator mounted to starboard. The engine room is finished with bright white surfaces for enhanced visibility, and the floorboard is easily cleaned, non-skid fiberglass. Due to the unstinting use of sound insulation materials as well as bulkheads placed between the aft-of-midships engine room and the forward staterooms, the Fathom 40 is built for extremely quiet operation.

INTERIOR WALKTHROUGH

With the inviting access onto the aft deck across the fold-down transom, nearly everybody will board the Fathom 40 through the aft bulkhead door. The benefits of the decision to all but eliminate side decks aft of the pilothouse are immediately apparent: the main cabin is much larger than normally

expected aboard a 40-foot boat. Large windows fill the cabin with light that extracts a mellow glow from the exquisitely crafted teak joinery. A U-shaped settee is on the port side of the main cabin, with an inlaid teak table ideally situated for comfortable dining or a round of cards. The settee appears capable of seating at least six in comfort, and perhaps more. A couple of easy chairs and a built-in lamp table are located to starboard, with a flat-screen TV and entertainment center in the starboard forequarter of the salon, as well as numerous options for stowing entertainment controls and miscellaneous supplies.

The galley is athwartship in the port forequarter of the main cabin. A U-shaped granite work surface tops a run of joinery that separates the galley from the salon, follows the gunwale, and then returns a few feet along the forward bulkhead of the compartment. A full-sized refrigerator/freezer will keep a lot of provisions fresh for an extended period of time, while a three-burner stove and oven, as well as an additional microwave oven, will handle the heating and cooking tasks. Clean-up is easy with a large stainless sink. The ingenious design of the "one step down" galley and salon allows the cook to be part of the social activities, yet the work surfaces are just low enough that dirty dinner dishes won't be an unsightly distraction as guests are enjoying dessert or after-dinner drinks on the settee.

Companionway steps lead from the galley to the lower deck, passing through an arched opening in the bulkhead. The Fathom 40 is a two-stateroom boat, with a double mattress in the guest stateroom on the starboard side of the companionway. Fathom has used some large windows in the staterooms and head, making the areas light, bright, and inviting. A hanging locker and drawers below the bunk provide ample stowage for the guest stateroom, and small touches like strategically placed reading lights will enhance the experience of anyone spending time aboard.

The master stateroom is in the forepeak, with a large walkaround bunk. The high profile "doghouse" on the foredeck creates additional headroom. The hanging locker is so large it could easily be described as a "walk-in closet," and there are a number of luxury

touches to be enjoyed in this comfortable stateroom.

The head is to port, with a private entrance from the master stateroom as well as an entrance from the companionway. There is a dedicated shower stall forward, a vanity with stainless hand basin and granite countertop, and a Tecma marine toilet.

Although the three compartments on the lower deck don't consume an enormous amount of total space, each of them individually seems amply proportioned.

The pilothouse utilizes one of the industry's most unique layouts. The wheel and helm console are in the starboard forequarter, next to the only door into or out of the pilothouse. Just beyond a nice chart table with LED chart lamp, an L-shaped settee and table occupies the port side of the pilothouse. At first, it seemed as though this lack of easy access to the port side of the boat from the helm might present some occasional difficulties when docking, but upon further reflection the Fathom 40's standard bow and stern thrusters will allow plenty of flexibility to maneuver when approaching the dock. If fitted with a left-hand prop, most boaters would tend to dock on the starboard side in any event, and the centrally located wheel on the flybridge can be utilized when a good view is required for docking to port.

UNDERWAY

We met Dave Irvine at Passage Maker's docks at the north end of Lake Union. The Cummins engine started immediately and ran, even when cold, without any trace of smoke or smell. As we reeled in the 50-amp power cord using the Glendinning Cable Master, Dave informed us "there's a system on this boat that automatically switches any AC loads from the shorepower cable to the inverter as soon as the shorepower is disconnected. When the genset is started, the system will automatically transfer the load to the generator as long as it is running."

We literally moved "sideways" into the fairway as Dave employed the bow and stern thrusters. Technology of that caliber will render a single-screw Fathom 40 manageable by boaters with only moderate experience, and will make a seasoned professional look even more expert.

We didn't get very far at all before our sea

trial was interrupted. We were boarded by the US Coast Guard, just off Gasworks Park. Even though our test boat hadn't been fully commissioned, Passage Maker managed to have enough life jackets, fire extinguishers, and other gear to meet all of the requirements. I thought we were probably on the verge of being written up when the dutiful young officer demanded to see the MARPOL garbage placard, but sure enough there was one aboard (just not installed), and the Fathom 40 passed inspection.

The first portion of our Lake Washington boat tests normally involve about 30 minutes of seven-knot cruising through Lake Union, Portage Bay, and the Montlake Reach before leaving the speed-restricted zone at Webster Point. Many boat buyers and certainly a lot of boat sellers probably consider this long slow passage a "waste" to be endured en route to open water where a vessel can show off its high-speed capability. This reviewer likes to go fast almost as much as anyone, but he also likes to go slow more than most.

At trawler speeds, the Fathom 40 has to rank among the quietest boats we have experienced in a long time. Many of us who own traditional "Taiwan trawlers" are used to running perhaps 1,500-1,600 rpm to make seven knots, with all of the associated machinery noise one would expect at about half to two-thirds throttle. At trawler speeds the Fathom 40 doesn't grumble or rumble, it whispers.

We made our first speed observation at 1,000 rpm where we were making only 5.6 knots, but fuel consumption was a miserly 1.2 gph. Nice economy, and with 400 gallons of fuel aboard a 1,500-mile range with prudent reserve would be achievable at this speed; but realistically, very few boaters would want to cruise this slowly.

At 1,200 rpm, fuel consumption was still miniscule. Our fuel meter registered 1.7 gph, and we realized 6.7 knots. (Fast enough for many people who appreciate the qualities of a slow trawler cruise.) This seemed incredibly efficient for a 40-foot boat, and an examination of the wake confirmed exactly why the results were so impressive. The stern wake amounted to less than a foot, and the bow wake was virtually non-existent (more properly deemed a "ripple" than a wave). Greg Marshall drew a hull that is very slippery in trawler mode.

Throttling up to 1,300 rpm put us just over the maximum legal speed inside of Webster Point. We made 7.1 knots, burning an even two gallons per hour. The wake was essentially unchanged from the non-event we noted at 1,200 rpm, and the engine noise remained a background distraction rather than any serious impediment to conversation.

At 1,400 rpm we achieved 7.6 knots, burning 2.3 gallons an hour. At the 1,600 rpm level we burned 3.5 gallons per hour to make 8.4 knots, well within reasonable expectations for most trawlers.

We found the nine-knot cruise level at 1,800 rpm, with a fuel burn of 4.9 gallons per hour putting us just below the two nmpg range. I noted that at nine knots the Fathom 40 produces slightly less wake than typical semi-displacement hull trawlers running one to two knots slower, and that engine noise was more audible but still well below average for most boats of similar size.

We began shifting more definitely into the planing mode around 2,000 rpm, making 9.9 knots and burning 6.9 gph. Many Pacific NW boaters are content to cruise at 10 knots, and a good of those 10-knot cruisers have reason to envy a fuel burn of under seven gph at such a speed.

The Fathom 40 seemed to undergo a personality change above 2,000 rpm, morphing from an impressive trawler and fast trawler to a still highly credible fast cruiser. We made 11 knots at 2,200 (burning 8.8 gallons), and while engine noise was still below what would be experienced aboard many boats, it began to approach something closer to average. The bow wake remained inconsequential, but a thoughtful boater would slow down a bit when passing slower or smaller vessels as the stern wake becomes aggressive enough to be a nuisance at 11 knots.

We achieved 12 knots at 2,400 rpm, 15 knots at 2,600, and with the engine cranked up to 3,050 rpm we found a top speed of 19.2 knots while burning 22 gallons an hour. The Fathom 40 runs very smoothly at the highest achievable speeds, and even at wide-open throttle engine noise is still somewhat less than most people would expect.

CONCLUSIONS

One of the most popular categories on

the market today is the "fast trawler," and a number of tugs and trawler-like vessels are available for inspection. We think that the Fathom 40 will absolutely appeal to those boaters planning to cruise regularly in the 10- to 15-knot range and who like to know that 19 knots is available for short periods of time when needed. We suspect that this is the market that Ric Reid and the crew at Fathom Yachts had in mind when this boat was conceived, and it will be well served with this well-executed and very competitive entry. Fathom Yachts has noted that most of the interest in this boat is vested among boaters not normally considered trawler-oriented. According to Tracy Prescott of Fathom Yachts, prospects expressing the most interest in the Fathom 40 report current ownership of brands like Sea Ray, Navigator, Bayliner, and Silverton, as well as "a large collection of runabouts." Tracy additionally commented, "Many of our customers now have time for extended cruising and are moving up from day boats. Most of our buyers are not the traditional trawler buyer."

We believe that traditional trawler buyers, content to run just a bit slower than the highest cruising speeds attainable with the Fathom 40, will be truly amazed at the smooth efficiency of the hull, the exceptional sound attenuation, and the remarkable fuel efficiency at traditional trawler speeds.

At a recent boat show, this reviewer's wife examined the interior layouts aboard a large number of boats around 40 feet in length and declared the Fathom 40 her favorite overall. Her sentiment will undoubtedly be shared by many people. There is more than sufficient integrity and value in the construction and design of the Fathom 40 that this vessel is indeed a special boat, and not just another pretty hull with a clever layout.

With a few carefully selected options, the fully equipped boat for sale at Passage Maker retails for \$549,000. (The buyer need only add his or her choice of electronics, a dinghy, and a davit to be elaborately outfitted.) For additional information, please contact Passage Maker Yachts at 877-223-1955 or visit their website at passagemakeryachts.com. ■