

"Yachting" EYES A BOAT

Tollycraft 37' Sport Fisher



Photo above, Jan Fardell; others by author



Opposite, left: Looking aft in amidships cabin, where berths and bureau can be curtained off. Upper berth is far enough outboard so that lower can serve as a seat. Opposite, top right: Swiveling upholstered helmsman's seat is centered on flying bridge. Note forward lockers. Port and starboard stainless steel grab rails and back-to-back convertible seats are standard. Opposite, bottom right: Bench-type helmsman's seat in saloon has refrigerator installed below, glass and dish racks behind, locker at foot. Starboard galley has Magic Chef gas range and double stainless sink as standard. Princess electric range is option. Left: L-shaped lounge to port in the saloon can be converted to a double berth of 6'5" length

The Tollycraft 37' Sportfisher

Ruggedly built and finely finished to combine practicality and luxury

By ART HEMENWAY

THE TOLLYCRAFT 37' Sportfisher is a fast, seaworthy fishing machine, and no detail in her design has been allowed to compromise that primary objective. However, she also has the luxury features of other Tollycraft yachts, and I have talked to owners who don't fish and think of her only as an ideal cruiser. Considering where she's built, and the fact that the company president cruise-tests every prototype before production begins, it is logical that she should suit both purposes admirably.

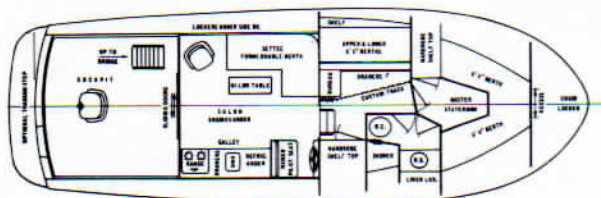
The Tollycraft factory is in Kelso, Wash., on the Columbia River, world famous for salmon weighing

up to 50 pounds and sturgeon with a waterline length of over 12 feet. The factory is about 50 miles upstream of the Columbia River bar, the shifting sands and treacherous currents of which have earned it the name of "Graveyard of the Pacific." When I talked to Tollycraft's marketing vice president, Kent Bowerly, about eyeing a Sportfisher, we both felt she deserved a better demonstration than a spin around Seattle's lakes and we agreed that a run across the bar would be ideal.

A week later in Longview, Wash., a few miles downstream from the factory, I was welcomed aboard

No-Ka-Oi III, a new Sportfisher owned by Steve and Joan Wilcox. Twin 225-hp. Caterpillar diesels were already warming up, and in five minutes we were cruising to Ilwaco, Wash., at the mouth of the Columbia. En route, I learned that Steve and Joan had lived all their lives on the Columbia, that their lives were pretty well centered on fishing, and that they had pioneered sport fishing for tuna offshore from the Columbia. Their knowledge of the Columbia's shifting sands and navigation aids was impressive. Their charts looked scarcely used, but were dated 1962!

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YACHTING EYES A BOAT

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In less than two hours we passed under the Astoria Bridge, where a westerly breeze freshened to 18 knots and kicked up a moderate chop on the brown, silt-laden water. Steve and Joan had run their boat fewer than ten hours, so Steve held a low cruising r.p.m. of 2,300 (about 18 knots in smooth water.) The boat cut through the three-foot chop smoothly, the bow rising and falling gently. I found the soft pitching action really outstanding. The hull forward has a fairly sharp deep-V bottom and a significantly finer entry than most contemporary designs. The V bottom cushions the descent of the bow, and the fine entry cuts into head seas and eliminates the shock of an abrupt rise. Spray is thrown well clear of the hull because hard chines prevent water from flowing up the broad flare. However, when the wind backed two points off the port bow it blew spray across the flying bridge and we retreated to the inside helm, where Steve turned on the three Sparton windshield wipers but still maintained his 18-knot speed.

Arriving at Ilwaco in the late afternoon, we were greeted by F. M. "Tolly" Tollefson, founder of Tollycraft, chairman of the board and avid yachtsman, who had arrived earlier aboard the prototype of his 1976 model Tri-Cabin 40. The plan was for Tolly to follow the Sportfisher over the bar in the morning to get some photos.

Weather forecasts that night were not encouraging: gale warnings off Cape Blanco to the south, small craft warnings off the Columbia River. Experienced yachtmen and fishermen who regularly cross the bar are conspicuous for their humility; if the weather is bad they stay in port—period.

Even so, the bar continues to exact a toll of well-found boats and capable seamen.

In the morning Joan, pessimistically, offered all hands Dramamine, and all declined, optimistically. At eight-thirty, photographer Jan Fardell boarded the *Tolly of Tollycraft*, and the two yachts cast off. It was a gorgeous sunny day with ten- to 14-knot northerly winds. Left over from the night before was a moderate chop of three to four feet with occasionally higher waves. The chop overlaid a long, low ocean swell. Over the bar the Sportfisher handled so well and moved so easily that I found myself rechecking the state of the seas every few minutes, thinking I had surely overestimated the chop.

For two hours we roared around over the bar, much of the time with throttles wide open, while Jan shot film and wiped spray off his lenses. The Sportfisher received a good workout, running with the same quiet pitching motion of the day before. She rolled very little, thanks to her 13'2" beam and modest deadrise at the stern. For a while I sat in the saloon observing the boat at top speed. Several times she flew off the top of a wave and fell far enough to crack the frames of a wooden displacement hull. Glasses rattled in their rack, but the impact was well absorbed by the modified V bottom. One small leak appeared in the center windshield and dripped a little on a chart. At cruising speeds up to around 2,600 r.p.m. (19.5 knots), the noise of the lead-fiberglass insulation below decks. At full chat (2,800 r.p.m. and 22 knots), engine noise increases substantially, but I don't feel that additional sound treatment would be justified for this intermittent or emergency condition. There is no perceptible vibration or deflection in the boat's structure at top speeds; it feels as though she were drop-forged in one piece. The hand-laid fiberglass hull, deck and cabin are glassed together as an integral unit. Heavy, full-length engine-bearing stringers are fiberglass, foam-filled to stop noise.

The focal point of the Sportfisher's design is the 10'10" x 8'3" cockpit. Its sole is finished, as are the side and fore-

decks, in Tollycraft's nonskid simulated teak planking. Three wide engineroom ducts form an integral part of the cockpit liner and add to the rigidity. To minimize snagged fishing lines, the stern running light and flagpole are centered on the after end of the upper deck. Stern mooring lines pass through large, flush hawse pipes in the 6½"-wide teak-capped side decks to ten-inch vertical cleats in the after corner of the cockpit. Two 6½"x2" open scuppers ensure speedy removal of water, and the six-inch step up to the saloon level has a curved riser to divert water aft. An optional fiberglass transom step with seven handhold slots is something I would consider essential for swimming and boarding from a tender. Two stainless steel grab rails on each side of the cockpit offer maximum security to anyone who has to swing out to a side deck in foul weather. A 30"x34" hatch gives access below for servicing the steering mechanism, bilge pump, 140-gal. water tanks and exhaust system. The area is painted pale gray and has a lot of space for gear stowage. Optional equipment includes a husky transom door as well as fishing gear such as fighting chairs, swivel chairs, outrigger poles and bait tanks.

The foredeck features a 3½"-high integral fiberglass bulwark topped with a 3½"-wide teak cap. The stainless bow rail with chromed bronze fittings is 29" high at the bow and sweeps down to 24" opposite the windshield before curving down to the deck. A ten-inch mooring cleat and 6½" chocks are furnished, as are 6½" spring line cleats amidships. Running lights are installed on the hull on teak pads so that they are accurately aligned. A stainless rub rail surrounds the hull at deck level. The shore power receptacle provided just below deck level on the port side is canted slightly outward. It would be easier to align the cable pins from the boat if it were installed inside the cockpit.

The flying-bridge deck, which is turquoise fiberglass with a nonskid surface, is reached by ladder with stainless steel hand rails and aluminum treads. A special feature is a four-inch-high molded bulwark aft, and a stainless rail surrounds the deck. Forward, grab rails on either side of the helm were real handy when we were out in the ocean. Below, two double doors and a single center door provide access to the stowage area. Visibility is excellent; the deck is 9½' above the water and the helmsman also has direct contact with the cockpit. All power plant instruments are duplicated except fuel gauges and an engine hour meter, and a sheet plastic cover protects the control switches from spray and inadvertent operation. But each switch is a fuse cartridge, a standard Tollycraft feature that I like. The idea of going below to peer in a fuse panel just as someone hooks a fish is not appealing. The Morse engine controls and rack and pinion steering systems are quality installations and performed faultlessly from both control stations. On the bridge, they are well-placed for a sitting or standing helmsman. Two wide back-to-back convertible lounges have enclosed bases suitable for stowing life jackets or seat covers.

Standard power for the Sportfisher is twin 350-hp. freshwater-cooled MerCruiser gasoline engines with 2.5:1 reduction gears driving 1½" stainless shafts. These give an estimated cruising speed of 21 knots at 3,000 r.p.m. and a top speed of 27 knots at 4,000 r.p.m. Standard equipment includes oil, water and transmission audio alarms; mufflers; four 12-v. batteries; vapor-proof battery switches; and one-inch fiberglass sound insulation beneath the sole. A twin Caterpillar 225-hp. diesel option includes vibration eliminators, fuel-water separators, water intake strainers, a 12-v. oil change system and lead-fiberglass sound insulation. A neat and thorough grounding system is standard, with a bus bar fastened to one of the main stringers. Onan generators, 6.5-kw. gasoline or 7.5-kw. diesel, are optional. The

pressure water system has a 12-gal., 110-v. Raritan heater with engine heat exchange.

Engineer room access is through a carpeted hatch in the forward end of the saloon. A 12-v. dome light illuminates the painted light gray interior. Headroom is 40" to 42" along a 24"-wide passageway between the engine stringers. Coded wiring and controls are neatly installed and easily identifiable. Two aluminum alloy tanks, total capacity 300 gallons, are installed amidships, where fuel load affects boat trim the least, and fill pipes are located on each side deck. Two large hatches under the carpeting provide a 46"x79" opening over the engines.

The Sportfisher 37 has three separate cabins, each sleeping two persons. An impression of open space and light is produced by large areas of glass in the saloon and warm, pale color schemes throughout the boat. Saloon panels are teak-finished high-pressure laminate, which combines the rich appearance of wood with the scuff-resistance of plastic. Drapery valances and a helmsman's bench are upholstered in saddle leather brown vinyl. The L-shaped lounge to port is covered in a quiet pattern of straw yellow and dull gold with a fine red thread. An off-white vinyl headliner extends throughout the interior. Headroom is more than 6'4" in the saloon and 6'3" in the center and forward cabins. The cabins are carpeted in a warm brown nylon over a thick pad. The saloon is 9'11"x9'7" and six inches higher than the cockpit, which gives the wide visibility from helm and lounge and also increases room for the engines below. Safety glass windows are 31" high over the galley counter and lounge, and the after bulkhead is all glass with double sliding doors and screen panels. Tollycraft's standard hand-painted gold veining on doors, lockers and drawers contribute to an atmosphere of elegance, a setting for gracious living and entertaining—but the appearance is misleading; the interior will stand up as well as that of a navy torpedo boat. One example: the galley drawer fronts are 1½" thick.

The lounge quickly converts to a 6'5" double berth with a five-inch-thick foam mattress. I slept on it and found it very comfortable. Adjacent to the lounge, the walnut-finished drop-leaf hi-lo table has a pedestal base so massive that it did not budge an inch during high speed runs through rough water. Too heavy for a woman to lift, it can be slid over the carpet with greater ease. Below the lounge are two large and two medium-size drawers, and aft is a double-service 110-v. outlet and space for an optional catalytic or electric heater.

The galley extends almost the full length of the starboard side of the saloon. Below the helmsman's bench is a Norcold 12-v./110-v. refrigerator, and aft of it, a rack for glasses and dishes. Then follows a three-burner Magic Chef gas stove with an adjacent 110-v. double outlet and a large locker below the oven, a stainless double sink with a Delta hot-cold mixing faucets, and a two-foot work area. Above the sink is a 12-v./110-v. light and below are two lockers. Below the work area is a pastry board and four sturdy drawers on rollers.

The control station to starboard has smooth and positive Morse engine and steering controls. Instruments set in a dark, customized panel include a Hobbs hour meter, twin tachometers and voltmeters, and dual oil pressure, fuel, and water temperature gauges. Eleven control switches have adjacent fuse cartridges. A fire extinguisher is installed to starboard of the helmsman and a locker 30" deep below his footrest can be used to stow charts, binoculars and other navigation equipment. The locker, however, means that he cannot stand behind the wheel. Above, to port, is a broad, vinyl-covered shelf that provides plenty of room to spread a chart.

Forward of the saloon and down three steps is an amidships cabin with two berths and a dresser to port and a

hanging locker and a door to a separate head to starboard. A curtain can be drawn to give privacy to the berth and dresser area, leaving a passageway to the forward cabin and head. Overhead 12-v./110-v. light fixtures are located on each side of the curtain track, and each fixture has a small 12-v. night light. The dresser has four drawers, and above is a 42"x18" plate glass mirror. The berths are 6'3" by about 27" wide and the lower one is far enough inboard to serve as a settee. The hanging locker, 19" wide by 39" deep with a shelf on top, provides convenient access to the main electrical panel, and battery switches, and, when installed, a manual waste pump for a recirculating head. The electrical panel, with fused 12-v. circuits and circuit breakers for each 110-v. service, is arranged like a wiring diagram, easy to understand. A panel above the locker opens for servicing the lower controls and instruments. A fire extinguisher is located near the locker door.

For the head, Tollycraft offers either a marine electric type or a recirculating chemical type with dual discharge system. A 19"x34" vanity with a cream simulated-marble surface has a stainless basin with a large locker below and an unusually large medicine locker above. A screened portlight, 2'x3' plate glass mirror, 110-v. double outlet, two 12-v./110-v. light fixtures, and a towel holder and toothbrush rack are standard. A shower stall has an Alson telephone-type shower and a vinyl curtain.

The fine entry of the Sportfisher 37's bow is not evident in the roomy forward cabin. The hull flare provides room for 6'9"x29" V-berths with five-inch-thick foam mattresses. A filler cushion for the V is optional. The berths have ample sitting headroom for reading, and above each is screened portlight and an 12-v./110-v. light. Below the berths are two medium-size lockers, one very large locker and three drawers. A hanging locker 19" wide by 39" deep with shelf above has lots of storage space behind the clothes rod. To starboard is a door to the head. In the forward bulkhead is a door to the chain locker. Except for the brown carpet, the color scheme is very light: off-white berth upholstery, white nylon carpeting hull liner, and white cabinet work with gold veining on the drawers and doors. Overhead is a screened 16"x19" hatch.

Several years ago I reviewed a Tollycraft 40 and praised its craftsmanship and attention to practical design details. Somehow Tollycraft has managed to retain these qualities in the face of rising costs. Tolly is still actively designing boats and testing models every summer. Ed Monk Jr. is continuing the hull design and engineering services that his father provided for many years. I returned to Longview with Tolly and our conversation for the four-hour trip was about boats and people, his favorite subjects. He showed me plans for an upcoming 48' displacement cruiser and sketches and ideas for other future designs. Watching Tolly that morning, aged 64, standing on the bridge piloting his boat on the Columbia River bar, I felt that this must be the very best way to run a yacht factory.

Back at Longview, having picked up my gear and thanked Steve and Joan for their wonderful hospitality, I remembered to ask, "Why is the hailing port of your boat Maalaea?"

"Oh," replied Steve, "we're shipping the boat to Maui to do some fishing."

"And what does *No-Ka-Oi* mean?"

Joan answered, "Can't you guess? It means, 'It's the best!'"

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