

**SPECIAL BLUEWATER ISSUE!**

# PassageMaker<sup>®</sup>

—The Trawler & Ocean Motorboat Magazine—

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# REBORN

## SHE'LL CRUISE THE DISTANT PACIFIC

*Delfin* is back where she belongs—cruising blue water.

After a reconstruction stretching through seven years, the 1965-vintage steel-hulled Romsdal is like new again. No, she's better than new.

Her hull, laid down in a yard in the town of Ålesund (in Romsdal County) on the west coast of Norway, is original, but stronger. Machinery and systems are new, the interior is fresh, and the aluminum deckhouse has been enlarged and improved. It would take a sharp eye to identify the changes. This 55-foot North Sea-type trawler looks original.

When *Delfin* launched from Romsdal Shipbuilders more than four decades ago, she cruised under her own power to Newport Beach, California. The family that bought her as a new boat sold her in 2000 to Bill Rogers, a California hobbyist who loves restoring classic yachts. After literally tearing her apart to replace corroded steel and install a new engine and generator, Rogers in 2003 sold the empty shell to Carl Loeb, a Mount Vernon, Washington, businessman and experienced ocean sailor.

Loeb's first trip aboard *Delfin* was to Mexico, where finishing work began. On the cruise south there was nothing in the pilothouse but the steering wheel, engine controls, and an old aluminum lawn chair, Loeb remembers.

Later, in 2004, the boat was loaded onto a transport ship and carried north to Bracewell Boatworks near Vancouver, where work progressed steadily but slowly over two and a half years on the installation of systems and equipment and finishing the interior.

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Story And Photography By ROBERT M. LANE



With all major work completed, *Delfin* motored to her home moorage in Anacortes, Washington, and in 2007 Loeb and his wife, Cheryl, took her north along the Inside Passage. In crossing Nahwitti Bar at the north end of Vancouver Island—a notoriously difficult passage because deep ocean swells hit the shallow bar and cause waves that are high and steep—*Delfin* took seas over her top deck. Loeb later found mud from the anchor splattered across the deck.

“And even that was not that scary,” he said. “I have total confidence in her.”

The couple’s 2008 cruising goal is the Queen Charlotte Islands of British Columbia, a trip that will put the North Sea trawler on night-and-day open-ocean courses.

“I’m going to go out and take a right for three days,” he said. A translation: Loeb will steer *Delfin* out the Strait of Juan de Fuca and into the Pacific Ocean, where he will set a course that will carry her to the Queen Charlottes in three days and nights of ocean cruising. The islands lie about 70 miles off the coast of British Columbia, generally west of Prince Rupert.

His long-term cruising plan is much more ambitious.

After he winds up his business career, Loeb intends to take *Delfin* on a great-circle route around the Pacific. He plans to make the usual down-coast run to Mexico and the Sea of Cortez and then on to Costa Rica. Growing more confident and ambitious, he and Cheryl then will turn toward the Galapagos Islands, the Marquesas, and Tahiti. After that: New Zealand, Tasmania, Australia, Samoa, Japan, Alaska, Hawaii—and then home. He expects the little ship will be gone three and a half years. And he has rebuilt and equipped *Delfin* with that trip in mind.

Loeb has ocean experience: sailing to and from Hawaii and circumnavigating Vancouver Island several times.

“I really like being out in the ocean. I find it very restful,” he said.

### A CLASSIC STORY

*Delfin* was not alone as she was constructed in the Romsdal yard. Two other steel yachts of similar North Sea design were built at about the same time. One was *Torsk*, also 55 feet, and the other was *Ulysses*, a 52-footer. All came to the United States under their own power, and by the most unlikely coincidence, *Torsk* and *Delfin* were moored in the same marina in Anacortes until recently. I’ve had the good fortune to board all three and to spend some time under way aboard *Delfin*.

I last saw *Ulysses* in Solomons, Maryland, at

Trawler Fest in 2006. She was in beautiful, all-original condition and had a loving and skilled couple aboard as crew. (BillP., founding editor of *PMM*, wrote about *Ulysses* in the Spring 1998 issue.)

I toured *Torsk* at a classic boat show in Seattle with her owner, Peter Marsh. She had been remodeled to provide a larger master stateroom forward, and her original Volvo engine had been replaced with a Gardner.

A December 1960 article in *Sea and Pacific Motor Boat* magazine reported that the first Romsdal to make the 10,000-mile trip from Norway to Newport Beach was a 65-foot wood trawler. She was imported by Peter Varney of Lido Yacht Sales under the name of Romsdal Shipbuilders, as were other Romsdals sold to buyers in the United States. People awaiting her arrival feared she had gone down in a week of huge storms off Portugal, but the yacht rode it out safely and completed the long journey successfully.

Classic Trawler Network ([classictrawlers.net](http://classictrawlers.net)), a website that focuses on Malahides, Romsdals, and other classics, reports that only 22 Romsdal yachts were built. Half were steel and half were wood. They apparently ranged from 45 to 96 feet in length.

All trace their basic design to heavy trawlers built for commercial fishing in northern waters. The raised pilothouse is aft, leaving an expansive foredeck for handling fishing gear and stowing catch below decks. They are round bottomed and have towering bows and pointy sterns. There is no question: they are tough little ships.

Several yards built similar North Sea fishing trawlers in northwest Norway, and all the boats they launched were known commonly as Romsdals, assuming the name of





## THE TASK

When Bill Rogers began surveying the work needed to refurbish *Delfin*, he found widespread corrosion in the steel deck. “It apparently looked like Swiss cheese,” Loeb said.

It was decided the most efficient method of repair would entail removal of the aluminum deckhouse and replacement of steel deck plating. The steel had been coated with a concrete-asbestos slurry, Loeb explained, and the coating protected the steel until it cracked and water spread beneath it.

When it came time to rebuild the deckhouse, Rogers decided to widen it by eliminating the port side deck. Because *Delfin*'s hull narrows in aft sections, the original saloon was tight. By increasing its width 15 inches, the saloon became much more comfortable as a gathering place for crew and guests.

While the boat was in pieces, Rogers installed a new Caterpillar 3306 diesel engine, a 20kW Northern Lights generator, and new doors and windows. Other than that, the boat was an empty shell. The new aluminum deckhouse was installed with a Detacouple explosion-welded structural joint, which bonds steel and aluminum while resisting corrosion between dissimilar metals. (Detacouples were not yet in use when the boat was built.) Rogers faired and painted the boat white. It was quality work; the boat's finish still looks new.

And then Loeb bought *Delfin*.

He was attracted to her simply because he is a sailor. “This boat was designed in the 1860s as a herring fisher in the North Sea, with a canoe stern, round bottom, and a mast,” he said. “When you drive her through the water at less than 6 knots, she leaves no wake. She goes through a wake like a sailboat.

“This boat is ideal for sailboat lovers like us,” Loeb added. “If she were not, I'd have a sailboat.”

In Mexico, Loeb had a yard line the hull with cork, put soft mounts beneath the engine, and install engine room flooring. Then, she was loaded on a Dockwise Yacht Transport carrier and brought to Vancouver for installation of mechanical and electrical systems, cabinets, and furniture.



Top and above: Facing settees provide a cozy conversation center in the saloon. Elimination of the port side deck created an additional 15 inches of interior width. The owner used dark tropical hardwoods from renewable plantations and painted plywood panels to recreate the Romsdal's original appearance. Opposite page: A hydraulic boom launches the 13-1/2-foot Boston Whaler from the foredeck. The mast and boom also can carry sails to provide get-home power in case of an engine failure.

the region. Peter Varney apparently saw good market potential in the heavy trawler yachts and in the name as well.

Some boaters spell the name “Romsdahl.” But devoted fans of the classic yacht say the proper spelling lacks the “h.” A glimpse at maps of Norway supports the spelling used here; Ålesund clearly is identified as being in Romsdal County.



Above: The restoration kept the galley in the same place but added appliances and features not available when the yacht was built in 1965. Removal of the side deck eliminated a portside galley door. Now, there's extra working space and a window offering good views. Below right: *Delfin* owner Carl Loeb, foreground, and Bruce Durrant of Anacortes Marine Electronics inspect the components of an overhead locker.

Loeb prepared computer drawings for every project. He built about half the new cabinetry and worked with Steve Hall at Bracewell, who fabricated other woodwork and installed it. Carl Vickers, an Anacortes woodworker, contributed to the interior finish, and Sean Herron at Bracewell led the way in mechanical, plumbing, and hydraulic projects. Loeb praised their talent and their dedication to the task of recreating *Delfin*.

Loeb specified African hardwoods from renewable plantations. Moabi was chosen for the sole, jatobá (also known as Brazilian cherry) for doors and cabinets, and padauk for horizontal surfaces. White plywood paneling with small V-grooves went overhead.

"I wanted her to look like the boat was built in the 1960s," Loeb said. "I wanted a Herreshoff Downeast look. If it is done nicely, it is elegant."

## TIME TO TOUR

Because *Delfin* has a canoe stern, the only boarding point is a starboard midship bulwarks gate. It faces a galley door and the side deck, which leads easily to the foredeck and to the cockpit.

All boats with canoe sterns should have a settee fitted to the curves of the boat. *Delfin* does. There's a table nearby, and a windlass for taking up stern anchor lines. A cabinet built by Loeb conceals an engine room air intake.

The saloon door is off center to port and is solid except for a portlight. Inside, an entertainment center is to port. A pair of L-shaped settees face each other, providing a nice social center in the saloon. One is to starboard and the other curves along the port side and across the saloon, just aft of the galley. Two cabinets provide storage. A Dickinson oil-burning space heater stands atop one cabinet. (There's also a Kabola furnace that provides heat throughout the boat, as well as potable hot water. For warm weather cruising, Loeb installed two air conditioning units.)

The galley is in the same spot where you'll find it on other Romsdals, but this one is unlike anything that was on the boat when she was launched. There's a stacked refrigerator-freezer, a Bosch electric cooktop and oven, granite countertops, a microwave oven, a deep stainless steel sink, and a trash compactor. Loss of the port side deck eliminated one outside door, but a large window brings in plenty of light and air.

North Sea-type trawlers are deep boats by design. *Delfin* has a draft of 7 feet 6 inches. So one ascends six steps to the pilothouse from the saloon, descends six steps to the staterooms and head forward, and uses a ladder to find the engine room.





The master stateroom is slightly to port at the foot of the steps and just large enough to hold a walk-around queen bed and a wall of cabinets for storage. To the right are a laundry center and the ship's electrical panels. A corridor with stacked bunks "for the grandchildren" leads to an office and a bunk room in the bow.

The Herreshoff look developed for the saloon is carried faithfully forward into the lower deck areas with dark wood trim and white paneling.

*Delfin's* foredeck is all business. A 13-1/2-foot Boston Whaler is stowed there, with a mast and boom to lower it into the water. At the bow is a 176-lb. Horizon claw anchor with 400 feet of 1/2-inch chain. A 125-lb. Fortress serves as a backup, and *Delfin* carries a 35-lb. CQR anchor aft.

The single door in the pilothouse is to port. It opens to a landing, with steps down to the foredeck and up to



Two berths in a companionway running forward are "for the grandchildren." The owner's office and an additional bunk room are through the doorway.

the boat deck, where Loeb carries an 11-foot-5-inch Whitehall rowing dinghy, a 10-foot Porta-Bote, and a 12-foot Tinker sailing inflatable.

With bow and stern thrusters, Loeb easily can make either port or starboard landings in a marina. Tying off to starboard is an easier task because of that side deck.

It would be convenient to have the pilothouse door open on the starboard side. But, in one of boating's frequent compromises, it wasn't possible to have a side deck and a pilothouse door to starboard. The steps needed to reach the raised pilothouse door would have blocked the side deck.



The owner built about half the new cabinetry for the restoration project. This office is in a forward compartment.

### DOWN THE LADDER

Open a door at the top of the forward steps near the galley and you'll see a ladder bolted to the bulkhead. Descend carefully, hanging on with both hands while watching where your feet go, and at the bottom there's a spacious engine room loaded with gear. And it's all new.

The Northern Lights generator is next to the hull, the yellow Cat sits on the centerline, and assorted other equipment (fuel manifold valves, fuel polishing equipment, a huge fire/emergency dewatering pump, a battery bank) is on the opposite hull.

Everything is readily accessible. A large array of plumbing for the hydraulic system and domestic systems is beneath a raised deck forward of the engine, but it all can be reached easily. A little time studying the assembly of piping will identify function.

Loeb clearly is in love with the Cat.

Because *Delfin* has no engine-driven get-home system, the main engine must be bulletproof. Caterpillar's 3306 has proven its reliability in driving generators on Alaska's North Slope oil fields. There, the engines endure heavy use and high-throttle settings to maintain energy production and then run at idle speed for hours until power is needed again, Loeb says.

Loeb often cruises with the engine running at 1100 rpm, well below its maximum turn rate of 2200 rpm. At that speed, it burns 2.5gph and the boat moves along at about 7 knots. "There is no issue with running it at that slow speed," he said, adding that cylinder temperature varies little whether the engine is loafing or cranking out 1800 rpm.

**DELFIN**

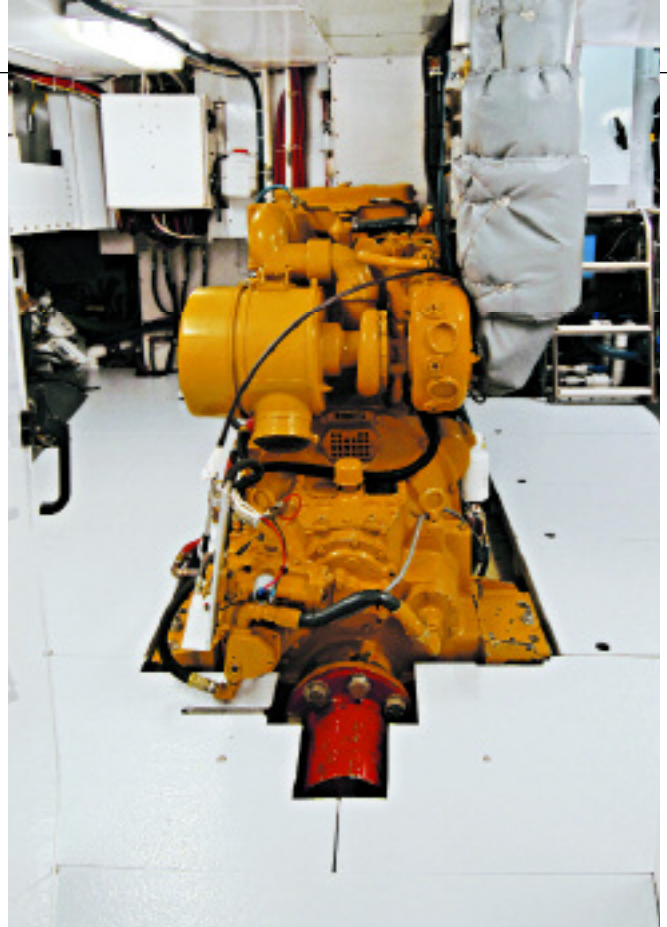
LOA	55'
BEAM	15' 6"
DRAFT	7' 6"
DISPLACEMENT	115,000 lb.
BRIDGE CLEARANCE	40'
FUEL	2,450 U.S. gal.
WATER	600 U.S. gal.
HOLDING TANK	250 U.S. gal.
GRAY WATER	250 U.S. gal.
GENERATOR	20kW Northern Lights M844LK
ENGINE	270hp Caterpillar 3306
HULL	Steel
PILOTHOUSE	Aluminum
HEAT	Kabola B-17 hydronic system
AIR CONDITIONING	Flagship FMAC16R and 124R
WATERMAKER	Village Marine STW (600 gal. per day)
STABILIZERS	Trac 9sf ABT
BUILDER	Romsdal Shipbuilders
YEAR BUILT	1965
REBUILT	2000–2007 by Bill Rogers and Carl Loeb

At 1350 rpm, the Cat burns 4.59gph and the boat makes 8.5 knots. At 2000 rpm, *Delfin's* speed is nearly 10 knots, and fuel consumption increases to 15gph. With 2,450 gallons of fuel aboard, *Delfin* clearly has ocean-crossing capability at those easy speeds.

The engine room is well insulated. At the helm, cruising at 8.5 knots, my sound level meter registered 62 A-scale decibels. A soft voice can be heard at that noise level. Even rushing along at nearly 10 knots, the reading was 71dBA, and normal conversation still was possible.

The hush comes from the QuietShip anti-vibration compound installed in the engine room, along with 1/4-inch-thick acoustical cork and 2-inch fiberglass insulation. Living spaces are similarly protected.

The Northern Lights genset is fitted with a hydraulic pump that will produce a flow of 10gpm. The primary hydraulic pump is on the Cat, and it will produce 15gpm at idle. Hydraulic gear includes a 10-inch bow thruster, an 8-inch thruster aft, Maxwell windlasses fore and aft,



Top: The single Caterpillar diesel almost looks lonely in the center of the cavernous engine room. At slow speeds the engine is thrifty, giving the boat a range of 5,900 nautical miles. Above: In a corner of the engine room, there's space for a washbasin, cabinet, and wall-mounted watermaker.

Trac stabilizers, a washdown pump, the telescoping boom that launches the Boston Whaler from the foredeck, and a Pacer 300gpm pump that can be used for emergency pumping or fire fighting.

*Delfin* carries three Rule bilge pumps. Loeb recognizes what many boaters don't—that those pumps are for picking up and discharging water that drips and splashes



Above: Fuel distribution, filtering, and polishing is managed from this engine room panel. In moving from storage to day tank to engine, fuel passes through a series of filters: 30, 10, and 2 micron. Above right: Aft of the engine room are a work area and a space for storing tools and parts. The stern thruster is in the athwartship tube at deck level.

from equipment. They are of little value if there's a hole in the boat. As long as the main engine or generator will operate, the Pacer will pump water overboard at a rate of 18,000gph.

The Caterpillar and generator are keel cooled with redundant dual systems.

Twelve NorthStar AGM batteries will produce 1,250Ah at 24VDC. A Trace 4024 inverter, an isolation transformer, and Balmar regulators are in the electrical lineup, too. The yacht carries 600 gallons of fresh water and a 600-gallon-per-day Village Marine watermaker.

### A SHORT TRIP

I boarded *Delfin* on a sunny afternoon for another tour and more talk with Loeb. An electronics technician came aboard to adjust the autopilot compass, which required taking the boat to sea.

Loeb cast off lines, backed from his slip, and handed me the wheel while he went out to pull fenders aboard. Not wanting to spoil his faith in me, I steered carefully and at dead slow through Skyline Marina. This required a few turns around docks and watching out for other boats.

I don't moor my boat at Skyline, but I know well that its narrow entrance is shoal. Remembering my last trip out, as a guest on a 75-footer, I understood we needed to hug the right-hand (or north) shore, and I began to steer for a close encounter with that side of the channel.

Fortunately, Loeb reappeared, took the wheel, and had the privilege of taking *Delfin* through the shallows. I was pleased. We pattered around on Burrows Bay for an hour or more while the technician did his work. With little wake following, we turned circles while the tech tuned the compass and I thought about the boat.

First, I mentally congratulated Bill Rogers and Carl Loeb for having the courage to reconstruct an old classic. It's important to keep these grand old boats afloat and in good condition. It takes fortitude, money, and love.

My second thought: this is a true trawler. Although her shape and lines were borrowed from an old seahorse of a fishing vessel, those characteristics make her a sturdy yacht one can take to sea without worry. Look at how well she works: excellent fuel efficiency at displacement speeds, superior seaworthiness, comfortable accommodations, and the gear needed to make her 100 percent self-sufficient for an ocean crossing.

But, you recall, she has no backup drive system. It's true that she does not have a wing engine or any kind of emergency drive attached to the generator. But *Delfin* does have some get-home capability. Don't forget that Loeb is a sailor and that *Delfin* has a mast and boom on the foredeck.

Loeb calculates that about 40hp is required from the Caterpillar diesel to drive the 55-footer at hull speed. He also calculates the sails he will carry will produce about half that much horsepower and drive the boat at about 2 knots. So, he's fixed as long as the galley is well stocked and the watermaker works.

Loeb wisely is building experience at sea on this motoryacht, first with a run north along the Inside Passage and then on the open-ocean course to the Queen Charlotte Islands. Soon, he, his crew, and *Delfin* will be as ready for the ocean as the yacht's namesake, the dolphin. 