

Another Man's Boat

Fitting Out: Brian's Stacer 430

After 40 years of fishing and boating in a wide variety of craft, Brian Jefferies has now retired and settled into a nomadic life doing what he loves most - fishing. In this excellent report, he shares with us his experiences in a wide range of craft, culminating in the Stacer 430. Needless to say, he's sorted that out, too.



Where It Began

Just under forty years ago, in my mid-twenties, I decided to buy my first boat, a Dehaviland Offshore 14' tinnie powered by a forty hp Mercury.

This very basic boat was the start of my learning curve both in boat handling, the do's and don'ts of boating and a couple of safety lessons that taught me to respect the sea more than any other place.

The boat and motor combo was well suited and the two stroke Mercury ran like all other two strokes of the era i.e. very roughly. I soon realised that there were many better hulls both from the ride and stability point of view.

Shortly after, I decided to upgrade to my first fibreglass boat, a Swiftcraft Tempest. This was a 16'9" narrow beam runabout with back to back seats and a unique 5 piece windscreen set in a glass moulding rather than aluminium framing. The hull had a fairly deep V, a narrow beam, was not very stable and had a very fine entry. This meant that when driving the boat into a rough chop, the ride was very good, but downwind, the fine entry or

lack of bow buoyancy, resulted in the boat wanting to broach unless it was driven in a very bow-up stance. It was not very practical as downwind the compromise between broaching and cavitation was slim. The Swiftcraft

"I recently sent an email to Peter Webster requesting information on my subscription, and mentioned that I had been a reader of F&B and a previous magazine he had edited for a large part of the forty years I have been a boat owner and that I was into my tenth boat.

He urged me to put pen and paper together with photos, giving an insight into the changes I had made to my current boat and the where's and why's of those changes. Many of the boats I have owned are covered in Peter's son Jeff Webster's Secondhand Trailer Boats, and more recently Secondhand Boat Secrets.

For me, and others of my age, reading them are a bit of a walk down memory lane . . ."

Tempest also was finished basically, had virtually no storage and was not in any way suited for fishing.

I only had the Tempest for a short time having seen a new Cruise Craft Reef Ranger for sale at another boat dealer, fitted with a 140 hp MerCruiser. This boat was more like it. An excellent hull and handling within the parameters of an 18'3" hull.

You could use this boat in quite rough water by just backing right off and the Bahia Mar style cabin and canopy kept the occupants safe and dry. In this boat I built a small galley so I could stay on board for a week at a time. The Cruise Craft Reef Ranger initially was delivered with cable steering. On any sort of a turn on the plane, it was nigh on impossible to straighten the steering wheel.

It wasn't long before it went straight back to the dealer in Victoria to have hydraulic steering fitted. The Reef Ranger was like a small ship with its MerCruiser sterndrive.

The motor was very noisy, as the engine cover was made from fibreglass and had absolutely no sound deadening. Also, the cover was much longer than it needed to be, so I cut it

back, extended the flooring, re-hinged the whole thing and added heaps of sound deadening material. It was still much noisier than either of my previous boats, which were of runabout style and were outboard powered. However, now the noise was less intrusive and was at least liveable. A very good boat for the day, as at 18'3", it was not too large for one person to handle on and off the trailer but still large enough for offshore fishing in safety, and with a cuddy cabin style to use in less than favourable weather. And with a sleeping space, going fishing overnight was quite pleasant.

Some years later, I was living in West Australia and decided to trade the Cruise Craft in for a maxi trailer sailer. I thought that the extra accommodation and living space would really suit spending more time onboard.

The minuses easily exceeded the pluses however, and I only owned it for about twelve months as I wasn't happy with the lateral movement of the 800 kg cast iron keel when I got caught in a blow on the way to Rottnest Island. As I fell off a wave I could hear and feel the bang as the keel moved sideways on its swivel bolt, making me

wonder if the bloody thing was going to fall off.

Another time, also going to Rottnest Island, I got caught sailing into a strong west wind (the Fremantle Doctor was very early that day), and I did not arrive at Rottnest Island until very late having taken twelve hours to sail about fifteen nautical miles! The trailer sailer had an outboard suspended on a bracket over the stern, and if you tried to motor into two to three metre waves, the motor spent more time out of the water than in.

Trailer sailers have their devoted followers, but I am not one.

Back To Power

I traded it back into a Mustang 2000, which was very luxuriously trimmed for the time, with shag pile carpet in the cabin and quite a bit of wood trimming. It very closely resembled a Sea Ray of the same era and I wondered how good a sea boat it would turn out to be. Surprisingly, it was very good as I remember.

I sealed and anti-fouled the hull, so I could keep it in a pen at the Fremantle Sailing Club to improve access time to go fishing on weekends. I found that if

I used the Mustang most weekends, the hull collected little or no growth and since it was outboard powered, the motor could be tilted to be totally free of the saltwater whilst in its pen.

I had the Mustang when I was transferred back to Queensland where the purchase of a new home resulted in me downsizing to a Haines Hunter 17L. This boat was powered by a Mercury 115 hp, which seemed ample grunt for a boat of its size especially if I got caught in rough water. It was also my first second hand boat, and although the hull was unblemished, the motor had seen some misuse and was proving unreliable. The small cabin was not really large enough to sleep in or even to shelter from a down pour however the hull handled sportily and there was plenty of room in the cabin for storage of odds and ends. I only had the Haines Hunter for about 12 months, as a new home needs some semblance of a garden, so the boat ended up sitting in the new garden, but largely neglected.

After a period of about twelve months, boating withdrawal symptoms caused me to start looking for another boat, albeit with a minimal budget, and