SOPHISTICATED LUXURY
THE NORTHWEST 45

Story By ROBERT M. LANE

Peter Whiting was showing off. No question about it.

From the lower helm of the Northwest 45, he set the single engine at idle, turned the wheel hard over, and watched gleefully as crowds on shore gaped at the yacht, spinning precisely in her own length. She circled like a merry-go-round.

The yacht with the pale green hull turned again, her towering bow scribing the same circle in the water, and completed another revolution on the fairway at Cap Sante Marina in Anacortes, Washington. The crowds lining the docks were attending a boat show on the city's waterfront, and if those folks weren't getting dizzy, the people on the yacht must have at least been woozy.

But, no. As the bow lined up with the harbor exit, Whiting goosed the throttle—sorry, there was not the usual puff of smoke—and the yacht headed straight out to sea.

The people loved it. The Northwest 45, the nation's newest production yacht, is built in Anacortes by boatbuilders who are residents of the city. While the boat in view had been deemed a prototype, a small fleet of sisterships was in production in an unmarked building near the waterfront. Whiting originally marketed the boat as the Northwest 42, but after reconsidering her overall length and her superior performance on a rough trip from Anacortes to San Diego late this past fall, he decided the boat deserved to be called a 45.

The yacht's precise turns are not luck. An articulated rudder is standard on the Northwest 45, and maneuvering performance is so good, the standard 10hp bow thruster will not wear out any time soon.

I was among the folks watching the Northwest 45 perform that autumn day. But, later, I was aboard the luxurious expedition-style yacht as she backed away from a fuel dock. We spun in a boat length again to show that the crowd-pleasing effort was not a rare event. And then we went cruising, where the boat proved as adept at following a course as she did at turning circles.

Indeed, there is more to this yacht than her close-quarters turning ability. All new and featuring three-

Robert M. Lane

Photos by Robert M. Lane

Top: With a single side deck, boarding and mooring are simplest on the Northwest 45's starboard side. The boat's asymmetrical design and a beam of 15 feet 10 inches create generous interior spaces. Above: The wide, covered side deck offers plenty of protection for the crew while under way.

dimensional computer design, five-axis computer-controlled plug cutting, infusion molding, and the use of only vinyl ester resins, she is a sophisticated, finely finished modern craft aimed at buyers looking for large-yacht quality and systems in a smaller package. She is eye-catching, from her optional hull color (Awlgrip's "Laurene green," named for Laurene Parlatore, *PMM*'s founding publisher) to her African cherry paneling and trim, sea grass wall coverings, leather accents in the master stateroom, and cork sole.

Other technical features also make a difference: Kevlar-reinforced fiberglass in underwater sections of the bow, three watertight bulkheads, an optional hydraulic get-home system, and a standard package that includes nearly everything one needs to go long-distance cruising, except for a dinghy.

Whiting, owner of Northwest Trawlers, said the boat was built with ABYC and CE standards "in mind." Although meeting all of those American and European standards probably is impossible, "We will work to comply," he said.

My cruise out of Anacortes was a short one. Whiting and crew were prepping the boat to travel down the coast to San Diego on her own bottom to join the FUBAR Odyssey, a group of about 50 yachts cruising together along the Baja California coast into the Sea of Cortez. They planned to make landfall at La Paz, Mexico, just before Thanksgiving. I would join the FUBAR Odyssey at Cabo San Jose and spend a day aboard the NW45 for a true ocean test of the yacht.

I'm glad I was not aboard for the first few days of that Pacific Ocean voyage. The semi-displacement yacht, equipped with optional hydraulic stabilizers, was buffeted by steep, sharp seas along the Washington coast by the first surges of a major storm that crashed ashore soon after Whiting and crew took refuge in Grays Harbor, where they sat six days waiting for weather.

After mooring safely in the southwest Washington harbor, Whiting wrote in his blog (nwtrawlers.blogspot.com): "Wow!! What a night we had. Confused seas of maybe 8 feet with a very close interval. The boat handled everything exceptionally well."

Wind speed had topped out at 41 knots, according to Whiting. "We hardly knew it, except for the spray being thrown up and then back over the pilothouse."

It was a little late in the season for a coastal trip, and making the voyage was a vote of confidence in the new boat. She had accumulated only about 25 hours of sea time before beginning the long run down the coast.

In a later message, Whiting wrote that the only mechanical failure was that of the ship's coffee grinder. Facing morning stints at the wheel without java, the

Photos by Robert M. Lane

Wide steps guarded by a tall handrail lead from the pilothouse to the flybridge.

crew members found a way. They put the beans in a plastic bag and tapped them with a mallet until they were just right for brewing.

THE BEGINNING

Whiting and his wife, Jan, were sailing in British Columbia on Sept. 11, 2001. Heading for home, not knowing what to expect, not sure if they could cross the international border, they talked about their future. Peter is a former corporate executive, and at the time he and Jan owned a yacht sales and charter business in Friday Harbor, Washington. They agreed one thing they wanted to do was build and sell a trawler-type yacht.

The first boat was the Integrity, a raised pilothouse boat built in China. Whiting watched over construction carefully and believes the boat reaching his Northwest Yachts (now based in Anacortes as Northwest Trawlers) was a good one.

The next step became obvious. They would build *this* boat themselves, in the United States. Northwest Yachts teamed up with Tom Hsueh and his Bayview Edison Industries in early 2005 and, with naval architect Stuart Archer, developed plans for a series of boats to be known as American Expedition Yachts. The 45 is the first. A series of larger yachts will be rolled out after the 45 is well established, and American Expedition Yachts has been working on the design of a motorsailer in the 80-foot range.

"We were telling people it would be an Alaska-to-Mexico rugged coastal cruiser," Whiting said about the 45. "Our buzz word was 'authentic,' and we'd darn well better deliver."

With her towering bow, the yacht's expedition styling hints of work by naval architect Steve Seaton. But her raised pilothouse, Portuguese bridge, flybridge, and spacious saloon also are basic elements of a traditional West Coast style that has grown from the work of Art DeFever, Ed Monk, Bill Garden, Lynn Senour, and others since the 1950s—one that is so right that it's now seen around the world.

Hsueh's Bayview Edison Industries cut the plugs for the NW45 on new computer-controlled milling

The foredeck seating is inviting when the weather is just right.

Photos by Robert M. Lane

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Above: The flybridge options include a large settee for guests. Left: The bow is out of sight from the flybridge helm, which can make docking tricky from the upper station.

equipment in a building on Highway 20 just east of town. That firm also built the molds, the articulated rudder, and the get-home system. The pieces were assembled in a leased building near the city's waterfront. (Oracle used the same building for construction of its America's Cup contender.)

The prototype was splashed just in time for a major fall boat show in Seattle; in fact, shipwrights worked on final details while the 45 was en route to Seattle and after she had tied up at the show on Lake Union.

"Our concept was that we would build a boat for a couple who could afford to buy something 60 to 80 feet long but didn't wish to manage a boat that large or deal with a crew that would be needed," Whiting said. "But we wanted to offer big-boat equipment and amenities."

Boats built in Asia, such as the Selene, which is constructed in China, and the Nordhavn and Krogen, built in Taiwan, display nearly similar quality, styling, and finish and offer strong marketplace competition.

"I think we are ready for that," Whiting said. "We are confidently stepping forward. Building in the U.S., where costs are high, is a calculated risk. But because we are a semi-custom builder, I think we will have our following."

After years of selling and chartering yachts in Friday Harbor and building the Integrity, Whiting believes he has a good feeling for what boaters like and dislike. He also relied on the experience of Archer at Bayliner and Northern Marine. For mechanical systems, he chose Paolo Jurkovich, a commercial fisherman who operates a fleet in Alaska and who is skilled in construction, hull forms, and the mechanics of boatbuilding.

Chinese boat prices, once at the low end on the market, are rising as quality improves and because of changing international currency values. "We don't have to deal with that," Whiting said. "People come aboard, and they are excited to see a boat built in the U.S." The base price of the NW45 is $849,000. "No one has batted an eye at that," he added.

THE BOAT

Every cruising boat needs a name, and Whiting chose *NorWester* for this yacht as she was being readied for her

Above: An electronics package is standard on the Northwest 45 trawler. Simrad equipment was chosen for the prototype. Right: Peter Whiting, developer of the Northwest 45, stands watch while cruising in the Sea of Cortez.

ocean adventure. She looks much larger than a 45, with her high bow and raised pilothouse. She has a LOA of 45 feet 4 inches, her length on the water is 40 feet 6 inches, and she has a beam of 15 feet 10 inches. She displaces 36,000 lb.

The yacht is asymmetrical, having a side deck only to starboard. A bulwark boarding gate opposite the pilothouse door and steps leading from the 30-inch-wide boarding platform into the cockpit make boarding safe and easy.

Obviously, this boat will make mostly starboard landings in marinas. But, with a bow thruster and articulated rudder, there will be little challenge in almost any other maneuver.

Adding to the dominant right-handedness of the boat is a cleat attached to the inside of the port quarter, from which an extra line may be run to a dock cleat for added security in poor weather. A stainless steel handrail fixed to the transom makes coming aboard safer, from either a floating moorage or a tender.

In the cockpit, an extended upper deck shelters the sliding central door that opens to the saloon. A window looks inside, and there's a storage cabinet with a sink to port. The cockpit is not large enough for serious group lounging, but you'll find plenty of space for that on the upper deck.

Let's pause for a short rant about the Diamond/Sea-Glaze doors. They are heavy and of top quality and are sealed to prevent air or water intrusion. I'm sure they'll work perfectly as long as the boat floats. My problem: The door latch is contained in a tiny box inset in the face of the door, and you have to stick your finger in and poke at things until the latch releases. Then, with a finger pushing on a hard, somewhat sharp edge, you need to haul open a door that probably weighs more than anyone aboard. It is darned hard and, in a crisis, might cause unacceptable delays in getting out of the boat.

My complaint is aimed mostly at the oversized door in the saloon, but it also applies to the smaller outer doors throughout the boat. Whiting acknowledges he's had trouble with the sliding doors but says use of a spray

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Photos by Robert M. Lane

Top: The wide saloon invites guests to relax in stand-alone chairs or on the long settee. Large windows let in lots of natural light, and the open galley arrangement is ideal for entertaining. Above: Comfortable leather upholstery, a casual adjustable table, and good views draw guests to the raised pilothouse.

lubricant on the track reduces the effort substantially. He uses Sailkote.

But why not build the door with a handle? I've seen similar doors equipped with a stout handle that you push down to release the locking latch and then can easily grab onto to haul open the big, heavy door. Why not here?

Stepping inside, the saloon follows classical yacht styling: an L-shaped, fabric-upholstered settee wrapping from the aft bulkhead around to the port side and forward to the galley counter. An expanding table opens to seat six for dinner. Casual chairs are to starboard, with an entertainment cabinet separating the seating area from a galley-area door to the side deck. A 26-inch flat-screen TV is on the aft bulkhead's port side.

Paneling and trim crafted from African cherry, known as makore, complements off-white carpet in the saloon (with Soundown padding) and cork flooring (finished with a polyurethane seal coat) used in the galley and elsewhere. Makore is a plantation wood, and its use, along with cork and natural fabrics, reflects an effort "to build green," Whiting said.

Overhead is Whisper Wall, a stretched vinyl paneling that can be removed easily. In the pilothouse, the walls are covered with a natural woven fabric, and in the master stateroom you'll find sea grass on the walls. Sea grass was popular decades ago, as I recall, so what happens if its popularity fades again in the future? "It's only wallpaper," Whiting said.

The galley is U-shaped and to port, with countertops of Avonite, a man-made product, and a tile backsplash over the Princess three-burner propane stove. The prototype yacht is air conditioned and has the necessary 12kW Northern Lights generator; an electric galley stove would seem to make sense in this package and is an option offered by the builder. (An oil-fired Kabola

Robert M. Lane

Sea grass on the walls, leather accents, and large hanging lockers add up to a stylish master stateroom with lots of storage space.

furnace that circulates hot water throughout the boat also is an option that will be appealing in climates where air conditioning is unnecessary.)

A cabinet is suspended from the overhead, but it is small enough that it does not seriously block the galley crew's view of the saloon or following seas. Designers were generous in planning galley storage, with cabinets beneath the counter, overhead, and in the corners above the sink. A skinny space, about 5 inches wide, running from floor to ceiling houses a pantry for many of the smaller items a chef needs for food preparation. It sits conveniently between the stove and the Dometic refrigerator/freezer.

Access to the engine room is through a hatch just outside the galley and near adjoining steps to forward staterooms, the pilothouse, and a door to the side deck. Similar engine room hatches are found on scores of other boats because they are easy to place and don't gobble up scarce space. They all have the same problem, however: movement of people inside the boat comes almost to a halt while the hatch cover is open because of the risk of tumbling into the engine room. Gas struts hold the hatch cover in the "up" position.

Adding to its "green" image, the Northwest 45 has holding tanks for black and gray water. All wastewater flows directly into those tanks for disposal at the right time and place; nothing can be dumped directly overboard.

DOWN BELOW

While the hatch is open, let's visit the engine room. It will be easier if you can scrunch your body to about half its normal size. To be polite, the engine room is space constrained.

This boat is a prototype and doesn't have the engine room ladder that will be fitted on production models. Below decks, there's only one spot that will accommodate two feet in a convenient place, and it's directly in front of the 400hp Cummins QSL9 diesel engine. Fortunately, Cummins provides a stout cover for the V-belts and pulleys on the front of the engine, and it is a safe place to stand.

The engine is fully electronic, and the boat is fitted with electronic controls at the helm. The engine is mated to a ZF 305-1 transmission. There is a crawl space along each side of the engine, but most basic service work can be performed from the standing space in the well at the front of the engine.

The Northwest 45 has an unusual seawater cooling system, and it's right there in front of your toes. Two seawater strainers are fitted to through-hull seacocks, one on each side of the engine. Cooling water flows through the strainers and short lengths of rubber hose to a curved, stainless steel pipe that lies deep in the belly of the boat and performs much like a sea chest or a manifold. Fabricated from welded lengths of stainless pipe to create a gently bowed distribution point, the cooling system has a row of valves that

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A compact but clean engine room that's loaded with accessories limits elbow room for maintenance and repair.

deliver water to the engine, generator, and refrigeration and AC systems.

Whiting said either seacock valve can deliver enough sea water to serve all cooling needs, should one plug with grass or mud.

Stainless steel welds corrode when submerged in sea water; the builder says production models will have the same seawater distribution device but that it will be made of corrosion-resistant cupronickel.

The valves may be hard to reach in an emergency, or for routine maintenance. An oil change system is mounted beneath the front of the engine, and it, too, looks awkward to reach. When I joined *NorWester* in Mexico, Whiting recently had changed the oil in the generator and said the work had gone smoothly from the forward position in the engine room.

The seawater manifold is an innovative method of cooling, and it obviously works well and should have a long operating life. My problem is that it is unique and complex. I'd prefer the use of standard, off-the-shelf products that can be repaired or replaced even while cruising in remote waters.

Major engine room revisions are on order for production models. The prototype has a fiberglass athwartship fuel tank forward of the engine. It requires a complex mold and is difficult and costly to build, Whiting says. It will be replaced by a pair of conventional saddles outboard of the engine and a 75-gallon day tank.

The Northern Lights generator, almost out of reach beyond the engine on the prototype, will be moved forward to the space vacated by the fuel tank. The switch also will provide room forward for storing spares and tools.

A bank of 10 AGM batteries is in the lazarette aft. The main battery disconnect switches, located in a side panel of the settee in the saloon, are easily accessible. It's also convenient to be able to switch on the boat's 24-volt system and house lights just after sliding open the door from the cockpit.

NorWester carries four 8D batteries for house use, two for operation of the inverter, two for engine starting, and two more for generator starting. All are 12 volt but are wired to deliver 24 volts to all systems but the 12VDC electronics.

Despite its space constraints, the engine room is brightly lighted, and system equipment, from the watermaker to exhaust, can be reached for inspection and service either on hands and knees or scuffing along on the seat of one's pants. A stainless steel safety railing keeps folks from sliding into the engine.

The engine room is well insulated, and the 400hp Cummins has the potential for efficient cruising, if the owner is happy with modest speeds.

On our trial run in Fidalgo Bay and Guemes Channel, *NorWester* ran smoothly and quietly. At 1460 rpm, we recorded 9 knots by GPS and fuel consumption of 7gph. The boat was loaded with fuel and water, and there were four people on board. There was no wind, and the sea was calm. (The fuel burn information comes from Cummins' SmartCraft engine monitor and reflects engineering calculations embedded in the software. The monitor does not physically measure fuel consumed.)

The calculated fuel burn rate was good, but equally satisfying was the noise level. I measured 58–59 A-scale decibels at that speed. The engine can be heard, but conversation is as easy as in the living room at home. Soundown insulation and tight sealing of bulkhead and sole penetrations keep the diesel racket in the engine room.

At 1630 rpm, the 45 was running at 10 knots, with a fuel burn of 9.9gph. The sound level was 59dBA. At wide-open throttle, the engine was turning 2120 rpm, and the boat was clocking 11.4 knots while burning 21gph (according to the SmartCraft monitor). The noise level was 70–71dBA; that's quieter than most production boats running at slower speeds.

The builder also offers a 610hp Cummins or a John Deere 610, either of which will drive the boat at 15 knots. I always look for an engine drip pan. *NorWester* has one, made of fiberglass.

While the engine was quiet, an annoying noise was coming from somewhere aft. It was chine slap. I would hear it again while cruising aboard the 45 in Mexico.

It's not uncommon for semi-displacement hulls to slap a bit in rough water, but there is no reason for it to happen so frequently in calm conditions. The builder agreed and already had ordered hull modifications for all Northwest 45s. This is why the first boat built is called a prototype. Changes and improvements are inevitable.

The boat has shown early appeal. Six were on order as this was written.

PEOPLE PLACES

Four steps lead down from the galley to two heads and two staterooms, plus significant storage space and a built-in Bosch washer and dryer.

The guest stateroom, with double bunks, is to port. Storage is available in a hanging locker and three drawers. Across the companionway is a "wet" head; that's a head with a shower but no stall. It's a common space saver on boats, but everything is apt to get splashed while you shower.

Peter Whiting

Robert M. Lane

Left: No, that's not the Wicked Witch of the West. Those feet belong to the mechanic's 19-year-old daughter, the only person who could fit under the engine to replace a hydraulic motor. Right: An unusual welded stainless steel seawater distribution system for engine cooling lies deep in the bilge. Because stainless steel corrodes in salt water, production models of the Northwest 45 will be fitted with a similar cooling system that is made from corrosion-resistant cupronickel.

A full-height cabinet with four doors is forward of the guest stateroom. It separates the guest space from the master head, offering an unusual degree of privacy for the crew.

The elegant master stateroom, with sea grass wall coverings and leather accents, has amazing storage space: two full-height hanging lockers wide enough to hang shirts and jackets, as well as cabinets along each side of the berth and beneath it. The master head is equally luxurious.

The pilothouse is up six steps from the saloon, with courtesy lights and a handrail on the left for easy travel in bad weather, and a single, centered helm chair. Doors open to the side decks. The destroyer-type steering wheel (without spokes) is trimmed in teak, and flat surfaces are

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NORTHWEST 45

LOA	45' 4"
LWL	40' 6"
BEAM	15' 10"
DRAFT	4' 3"
DISPLACEMENT	40,000 lb. (half load)
BRIDGE CLEARANCE	19' (with arch and mast up)
ENGINE	Single 405hp Cummins QSL9 (standard)
GENERATOR	12kW Northern Lights
FUEL	600 U.S. gal.
WATER	300 U.S. gal.
HOLDING TANK	150 U.S. gal.
GRAY WATER	50 U.S. gal.
MAXIMUM SPEED	14 knots (standard power)
CRUISE SPEED	9–10 knots
RANGE AT CRUISE SPEED	600nm (at 9 knots)
DESIGNER	Stuart Archer/AEY
BUILDER	American Expedition Yachts
BASE PRICE	$849,000

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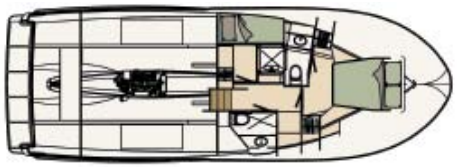

Courtesy American Expedition Yachts

finished in black, eliminating the blinding reflections that can come with white or light-colored surfaces. An electronics package is included in the base price; Whiting chose Simrad equipment for *Nor'Wester*.

Cabinets around the helm offer storage, and flat surfaces adjoining the helm provide space for paper charts and, aboard *Nor'Wester* at least, a place for a keyboard and mouse. A leather-upholstered settee runs across the aft wall and forward along the port side. It fits people nicely, with plenty of leg and back support. It also works as a pilot berth.

A high-low table is the perfect place for lunch or additional navigation work. The walls are covered with fabric, while tightly crafted woods and veneers edge windows, the doorway, and the helm.

The windshield curves around the corners of the pilothouse. From a seat behind the table, the view through the center of the curve is distorted to an annoying degree. For the person in the helm chair, the viewing angle is different and the degree of distortion is minor, but it's still noticeable.

Five steps lead from the port pilothouse doorway to the upper deck. The steps lift and open to storage for propane tanks. The rise on the lowest step is shorter than for the others. Two courtesy lamps make the stairs safe at night.

A tender lies athwartships at the aft end of the upper deck. A hoist is standard equipment, but dinghy purchase is left to the owner. Boaters have too many personal favorites when it comes to choosing dinghies, Whiting said, and the builder wants the owner to make the selection.

Amidships on the upper deck is an upholstered settee that is enormous, and that's no exaggeration. C-shaped, it is a good spot for at least six guests to gather while the captain handles the boat from the flybridge helm. Owners probably would install a table and a bimini for weather protection. The seating, engine controls, and electronics seen on *Nor'Wester* are extra-cost options.

A fixed radar arch rises from the edges of the pilothouse forward of the settee. There's only one helm chair, but grab bars were installed on each side of the flybridge helm for those who want to have a view forward.

As for that view: you can't see the bow of the boat while seated in the flybridge helm chair, or while standing next to it. Whiting said he measured the line of sight from both helms and determined that the closest point in the water ahead of the bow that can be seen from the flybridge seat is only 5 feet farther out than the closest point seen from the lower helm.

For cruising, the difference is minor. The person at the helm should be able to see debris in the water in sufficient time to change course.

It's a different story in coming alongside a dock or picking up a mooring. You've got to know where the bow is. One solution would be mounting wing controls forward along the starboard side deck, or working landings from the lower helm, where visibility is good.

ADD-ONS

While the base boat comes ready to cruise, save for a dinghy, buyers probably will be attracted to optional equipment: the kind of stuff that adds comfort, convenience, and pleasure to long-haul cruising.

The options list includes a full hydraulics package for the stabilizers, dinghy hoist, windlass, and bow thruster. Also optional are a watermaker, freezer, dishwasher, ice maker, added fuel capacity, washdown systems fore and aft, the oil changing system, and a weed and line cutter on the propeller.

Additional electronics may be added, along with a Glendinning power cable retrieval system, a tool bench in the engine room, and a searchlight.

Most of these options are aboard *Nor'Wester*. One option she doesn't have, but which is available, is the Krill Systems electronic monitor that keeps tabs on everything on board except the cook's heartbeat.

THE PENULTIMATE TEST

After successfully battling rough seas along the Washington and Oregon coastlines, Whiting, his crew, and *Nor'Wester* reached San Diego to prepare for the FUBAR Odyssey. Fifty boats left together in early November, and crews generally were pleased to find easy cruising all the way to Cabo San Jose, at the southern tip of Baja California. The boats were "going downhill," with light north winds and gentle swells coming from behind.

Leaving Cabo San Jose, the fleet had turned the point at the southern tip of Baja California and was going "uphill," with the wind on the bow, and it was a choppy, bumpy ride. I was aboard *Venture,* a 65-foot Fleming, and those of us on board made good use of the yacht's grabrails. It would have been worse without her set of active stabilizers.

The next morning, *Venture* carefully backed toward *Nor'Wester* in an anchorage in Bahia de Los Muertos, and I stepped from one swim step to another. The weather forecast had suggested another day of bumpy weather, but the fleet pushed north through light swells to La Paz, its final stop.

With her articulated rudder, active stabilizers, and the Simrad AP25 autopilot steering, the Northwest 45 followed the day's courses with little correction. Whiting said the boat had performed equally well earlier with large swells swooping down on the stern, a condition that makes many yachts hard to steer, by autopilot or by hand.

I prowled the yacht as she cruised north, refreshing my recollections of her systems and layout. The autopilot and plotter were doing most of the work,

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The newly renamed Northwest 45 cruises off the coast of Baja California, ready for her next adventure.

but usually two of the five crew members were on watch at the helm. At times, several relaxed on an upholstered seat on the foredeck.

In La Paz, *Nor'Wester* was directed to a starboard tie in an inner harbor. We were expecting a bow-in landing, but instead Whiting had to back into a slip with little space to spare. A light wind off the starboard bow complicated things. I was aft, ready to push off from a neighboring sailboat, but Whiting backed her in nicely. The articulated rudder did its work well, but he did use the bow thruster.

Clearly, the Northwest 45 had passed one crucial test by performing well on an often-hazardous ocean trip. It's remarkable that a boat fresh out of the factory, with only a few hours on the clock, could travel that far and record trouble with only one system: the coffee grinder.

The builder has met its initial goal of offering a made-in-America, semi-custom, finely crafted, luxurious boat with loads of appeal. Her successful cruise to La Paz from Anacortes will give the builder additional bragging rights in the boating world's marketplace, which is the ultimate test.

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