



Roger Smith, owner of the first Hunt 72, heads out of the Palm Beach show to find some open water.

A LABOR OF LOVE FOR HER OWNERS—AND THOSE WHO BUILT HER—THE HUNT 72 WAS DESIGNED TO EXCEED EXPECTATIONS. BY DANIEL HARDING JR. PHOTOGRAPHY BY BILLY BLACK

# PURSUIT OF PASSION

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Walking along the bulkhead in West Palm Beach, my head was on a swivel trying to find the Hunt 72 I was scheduled to test. I recognized a similar lost look ahead of me in the face of Hunt President Peter Van Lancker.

“I think we’re looking for the same boat,” he offered with a handshake.

“Well at least I know I won’t be late.”

We continued making small talk as we set out in search of the 72—in itself not a difficult task. With a dark blue hull and gleaming teak everywhere, she stands out like a haystack in a pile of needles.

Our conversation wandered from the weather (it was beautiful) to the Palm Beach boat show that concluded a couple days prior, to travel schedules. Van Lancker had been in Palm Beach for the show, then returned home to Rhode Island for a spell, only to return for our test.

“You’re a man on the move,” I suggested.

“It’s a lifestyle, not a job. If this was a job it would be impossible,” he replied with a laugh. This was unfiltered, off-the-cuff Van Lancker, who wasn’t spinning a line he thought would look good in print. No, it was clear: As we spotted the boat and made our way toward it, he meant what he said.





Climbing aboard the 72, I was reminded of the first time I met the boat at the Newport International Boat Show months earlier. She towered above her siblings—a mix of runabouts and weekenders—like a protective older sister. She shared a resemblance to the other models, but it was also apparent this boat was different.

Third in Hunt's line of Ocean Series yachts, which includes a 68 and 80, and the result of a collaboration between Hunt Yachts and Taiwan's Global Yacht Builders, she is a semicustom boat.

On my visit to Newport, I immediately appreciated the attention to fit and finish on the 72. A gleaming mahogany interior with navy-blue accents gave the boat a classic look. My aversion to crowds and the large congregation in the saloon sent me scurrying to the engine room and crew's quarters where, again, attention to detail was apparent. Beefy handrails between the Caterpillar C32s, easy-to-inspect inboard Racors, and an amply sized workbench forward were all salty touches that boded well for the new 72. I knew then that, selfishly, I wanted to be the one to test this boat.

Stepping into the saloon, this time at Palm Beach, I found yet another crowd milling about. The owner Roger Smith and his wife, Jennifer, a photographer, and a pair of prospective Hunt buyers were eagerly awaiting our departure.

I sidestepped the crowd, like I'm known to do, and made my way



*Inspired by the owners' previous Trumpy, this Hunt 72 features rich mahogany. Interior designer Martha Coolidge (left) kicks back on the flybridge, one of her favorite spots aboard.*

up to the flybridge where I found interior designer Martha Coolidge doing the same.

"I think this is the most beautiful spot on the boat," Coolidge said, gesturing around her. "Jennifer [the owner's wife] is unusual for an American woman because she actually likes to tan as opposed to the rest of us who are terrified of the sun. She had this flybridge settee created to serve as a sunpad. It's perfect for her. Jennifer and Roger are also paddleboarders and water people, which is a big reason why we went with the lee cloths up here. And when you're cruising along at 26 knots, the structure of the boat is such that the wind really does go right over you."

The flybridge was indeed pleasant with a number of social spaces that included an amidships bar. As we slipped our lines and made our way through the long, no-wake zone toward the inlet, the flybridge became a popular spot from which to enjoy the South Florida weather.

Stepping into the saloon with Coolidge, she explained: "Jennifer and Roger really wanted something similar to what they experienced with their previous Hinckley and their Trumpy before that. We went through a lot of design iterations with the interior filled with either mahogany or cherry, like on their old Hinckley. We ended up going with mahogany, and we have a lot of it. I often thought about mixing in some fabrics, but the wood just gave it a more masculine feeling

that was definitely inspired by the Trumpy and the golden age of yachting. She's a modern, proper yacht."

The only spots without mahogany are the heads because, according to Coolidge, they're smaller areas that you want to make as bright as possible. It's a balancing act to make the boat feel dark and handsome yet altogether bright.

As we meandered out to the inlet I found Van Lancker in the cockpit; he was quite obviously chomping at the bit to get into open water.

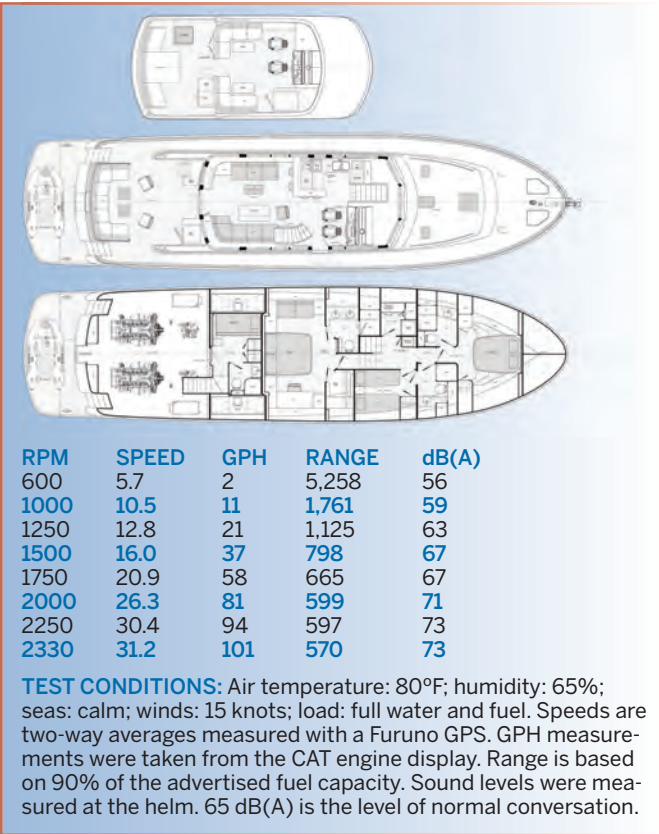
"You'll see. This boat is a beast out on the ocean," he said laughing. "Yeah, she has fine furniture, but she's a wolf in sheep's clothing, let me tell you. This hull is identical to what the harbor Pilot boats





LOA: 71'3"  
BEAM: 19'6"  
DRAFT: 5'5"  
DISPL.: 130,000 lb.  
FUEL: 2,050 gal.  
WATER: 490 gal.  
POWER: 2/1,900-hp  
Caterpillar C32  
TRANSMISSION: Twin Disk Quickshift,  
2.09:1 gear ratio  
PROPELLERS: 39" x 42" 5-blade NiBrAl  
GENERATOR: 2/25-kW Northern Lights  
PRICE: Upon request

"You'll see. This boat is a beast out on the ocean," Peter Van Lancker (right) said. He wasn't wrong.



Plenty of display space welcomes a hands-on owner-operator to the helm.

have and they go out in the roughest conditions. It's by the same designers, with the same hull form; it just weighs a hell of a lot more [130,000 pounds fully loaded]."

And, once again, he wasn't kidding or putting on an act. I took control at the lower helm. Powering the boat up through the inlet I noticed very little speed hump; the 72 glided—not unlike a plane—onto, well, plane. I looked to my left at Roger and thought how fitting that was, since he pilots his own airplane. He would explain that he values three things above all else in his vessels: "The important considerations for a boat/plane are speed, handling, and the ability to operate them on my own," he says. "I enjoy being hands-on."

According to Coolidge, "Roger's experience as a pilot made the design process interesting. There are a lot of redundancies on the boat and he just became an expert with all the electronics."

I continued taking the boat through any wake I could find, even running her in tight circles, like a dog chasing its tail, to kick up some waves. One thing quickly became clear: This is a driver's boat. Sightlines were excellent; she was sporty and quick with a 31-knot top end, and perhaps most importantly felt solid underfoot.

"Well, it's built to ABS guidelines, so there's some serious structure in this boat. There are rib frames that go all the way up the side," says Van Lancker. "None of the furniture aboard is holding the boat together. It's built as a structure then the furniture goes in. That makes a huge difference in how the boat handles in a sea."

What also makes a difference is the e-glass used in the hull and the 80,000 man-hours invested in the boat by Global Yacht Builders.

Running the 72 all over the ocean, I looked back to find everyone aboard congregating in the saloon, chatting away like old friends. I started to realize how many moving parts go into building a yacht like this for exacting owners in a yard thousands of miles away.

What's the glue the holds all this together? I wondered.

Roger provided some insight. "When building a boat, it's important to have faith in the team provided by the boatbuilder," he says. "Most importantly I encourage people to educate themselves by attending boat shows, reading magazines, and doing other research. Do your homework and enjoy the journey."

That is sound advice, I thought. But what makes a project like this work? What inspires all these people to come together and create a one-of-a-kind yacht? Van Lancker had alluded to the answer in the parking lot that morning. It's not a job for any one of them, it's a lifestyle. □

Hunt Yachts, 401-324-4201; [huntyachts.com](http://huntyachts.com)

## Billy Black's Comeback

I can't write a story about a passion for the water and for boating in particular and not mention our photographer for the Hunt 72, Billy Black. One of the premier marine photographers, Black is known throughout the industry as much for his photos as for his personality. Simply put, and I have hundreds of sources to back this up, he is one of the nicest guys on the dock. Quick with a smile and a kind word, he is a pillar at any major boat show. In fact, I sometimes try to avoid walking the docks with him—he's like the mayor, he can't go 10 feet without being stopped by someone saying hello.

It was strange then to be walking the docks of the recent Miami boat shows and not bump into him. It would take something drastic, like a bout with cancer (an opponent he has on the ropes), to keep him from being there.

It warmed many a heart to see Billy, in between treatments, at the Palm Beach International Boat Show snapping away. When he climbed aboard the 72 during my test, everyone gave him a hug. "None of that handshake stuff," quipped Hunt Yachts President Peter Van Lancker as he embraced Billy.

From there you could have expected him to enjoy the boat ride and the sunshine while snapping the occasional photo. But to expect that is to not understand Billy. He couldn't help himself. Firing away thousands of shots, he was everywhere: the staterooms, the flybridge, orchestrating wardrobe changes, up on the bow during hard S-turns.



TOM SERIO

It's not easy work, not the way he does it, but you can tell there's nothing else he'd rather be doing.

I think that's why he's so well respected. The marine industry is filled with people that, for better or worse, are passionate. And passionate people can't help but tip their hat to someone they see out there living their dream. I was glad to be on the Hunt 72 on that beautiful day, but I was even happier to see Billy, back at work.