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BRACEWELL

41

**KICKING IT UP
A NOTCH**

In this chilly economic climate, one might wonder what would motivate anyone to launch production of a new yacht—or, in the case of Richmond, B.C., boatyard owner Lance Bracewell, a freshened-up sequel to a popular trawler model.

For Bracewell, the decision was a matter of opportunity and timing.

The opportunity arose when production molds from nearby Camano Yachts were put up for sale. One particular set of tooling that caught Bracewell's attention was that of a 41-foot semi-displacement cruiser that had been introduced recently by Camano, an adaptation by Brad Miller based on the Bob Warman-designed Camano 31. In production since 1990, the popular 31 had become a common sight throughout the Pacific Northwest and beyond, and by 2010 its numbers had grown to nearly 270, an impressive fleet by any measure.

Offering many of the same attributes that had driven the popularity of the 31, the new 41, with its greater dimensions, incrementally higher speed capability, and added features, already had shown promise in the face of the gathering economic storm. To Bracewell's thinking, it merited careful scrutiny.







The timing of Bracewell's initiative was an even weightier issue, and certainly not a strategy for the faint of heart. While others were holding off on developing and launching new models, he reasoned that this was a moment when innovation could generate the greatest impact on the market.

"There really is no better time to introduce what amounts to a new boat," Bracewell explains. "The 41 establishes us as an innovator and a quality builder in the semi-displacement cruiser category."

Built as it is around an existing design, can the 41 realistically be termed "new"? Given the number and degree of changes Bracewell has wrought, one certainly could make that argument, although the proprietary hull form was essentially left unaltered. Wisely so, it would appear, for the Bracewell 41 predictably delivers an admirable combination of speed, ride comfort, and range.

Key to the 41's hull design is a substantial full-length keel whose cross section is tapered in a way that,

according to Bracewell, concentrates a good share of the yacht's displacement low and near the centerline. Moreover, a noticeable bulge just aft of amidship creates a depression in the mechanical space that allows the single diesel engine to be positioned below what the nominal bottom contours otherwise would permit.

This combination of geometry and engine placement lowers the boat's center of gravity to improve roll resistance. It also flattens the propeller shaft angle to an efficient 7 degrees and allows a lower main-deck sole, maximizing interior headroom (6 feet 7 inches aft in the saloon, 6 feet 10 inches forward) while preserving a salutary height-to-length ratio in the exterior profile.

DESIGN IMPROVEMENTS

During his 30-plus years in the pleasure-boat industry—the last 10 spent as owner and manager of the British Columbia yard that bears his name—Lance Bracewell has amassed a portfolio that includes both new construction and refit/repair projects. Experience with the latter has revealed to him much about how boats succeed or falter after years or even decades of use, and in large measure has shaped his philosophy about how a boat should be built.

Accordingly, while the Bracewell 41's exterior styling generally follows that of its Camano predecessor, a few significant changes reflecting that philosophy are worth noting. For example, on hull number 1, the flybridge deck has been stretched sternward to extend beyond the transom, thus completely sheltering the 6-by-12-foot



Top left: The Bracewell 41's generous boat-deck overhang fully shelters the cockpit below. Above: The upper helm features dual chairs and a second Furuno NavNet electronics station.



Above: Large expanses of glass lend a sense of interior space. Right: A good-size refrigerator-freezer adds provisioning volume for longer voyages.

cockpit from sun and rain. This is an agreeable departure from the more common—and no less curious—practice among builders to stop just short of a full overhang, a lapse that denies owners the benefits of a completely covered deck. Access to and from the dock is by way of a molded fiberglass door (in lieu of a plastic panel) and then across an integral transom platform under which the hull extends to augment the running surface, fractionally improving both planing and displacement performance.

Immediately apparent upon entering the saloon of the inaugural Bracewell 41 is the extensive use of cherry joinery in wall paneling, window frames, and cabinetry. A pair of shallow box beams running the length of the saloon overhead and extending to the trailing edge of the cockpit overhang also are faced with cherry, imparting a classic coffered look in the main cabin that complements the traditional stile-and-rail motif of cabinets and doors. (Other interior finishes are available, as well.) The box beams, along with edge-to-edge biaxial and triaxial knit



fiberglass and fiberglass mat alternating with two substrates of 1-1/4 inch rigid foam coring, stiffen the flybridge deck to bear the weight of the standard 10-foot tender.

For those owners loath to let a little inclement weather stand in the way of an extended cruising season, Bracewell thoughtfully includes a wet locker just inside the main cabin door where sodden foul-weather gear may be stowed. An L-shaped settee with a high-low table nests into the saloon's starboard aft corner and



Overhead beams reinforce the top of the deckhouse, freeing the interior from the intrusion of structural posts and bulkheads.

converts to a double berth to expand sleeping capacity as needed. A pair of occasional chairs or built-in seating on the port side completes an arrangement that's well suited for relaxation and entertaining.

Just forward, a peninsula counter defines the U-shaped galley, which is fitted with a propane range, microwave, fridge-freezer, ice maker, and double stainless steel sink. Opposite, a double Stidd helm chair faces a logically arranged control and instrument panel; an overhead-mounted cabinet provides additional space for monitors, radios, and other equipment. To expedite docking maneuvers, an adjacent weather door by Diamond/Sea-Glaze offers immediate access to the starboard side deck. Vertical windshield panes deliver clear sight lines, with minimal reflected glare even from the ecru-colored console surface.

Whereas the original Camano 41 design featured a single stateroom with separate head and shower compartments flanking the lower-deck companionway, Lance Bracewell recognized an opportunity to broaden the boat's appeal as a family-friendly cruiser by adding a second cabin. To accomplish this, he redrew the existing

stateroom's forward-most bulkhead 14 inches closer to the bow and moved its aft bulkhead about 8 inches forward. The resulting gain in volume allowed him to create not only the second stateroom (on the port side) but also a single head compartment to starboard with toilet, vanity, and separate shower. Voilà—a cruiser for four to six adults.

The second cabin is equipped with a double berth that extends just under the galley sole, a compact hanging locker, and a cabinet concealing a built-in washer/dryer. Both staterooms feature the same cherry woodwork in cabinetry, molding, and hull-side planking that enriches the main cabin.

A TURNKEY CRUISER

From the cockpit, a stainless steel ladder ascends to the flybridge deck and an upper helm fitted with engine and thruster controls and navigation displays. A waist-high coaming topped with a stainless-steel-framed venturi windscreen encloses the bridgedeck on three sides. Seating includes two Tempress helm chairs and an L-shaped lounge; there's also a pedestal table. In addition to sheltering the cockpit area below, the extended



bridgedeck creates ample real estate topside for stowing the tender or deploying lounge chairs and sunpads.

A 600-lb.-capacity hydraulic crane, mounted on the starboard side, is properly supported by a compression tube, and the impressive two-tiered signal mast would be entirely at home on a 90-footer. From a strictly aesthetic viewpoint, who could fail to note the deep-blue hull and red waterline stripe contrasting with the bright-white superstructure (one of many available color schemes), or the elongated house windows that, even as they open up the view from within, visually lengthen the exterior profile compared to the phalanx of nearly square panes on the predecessor model?

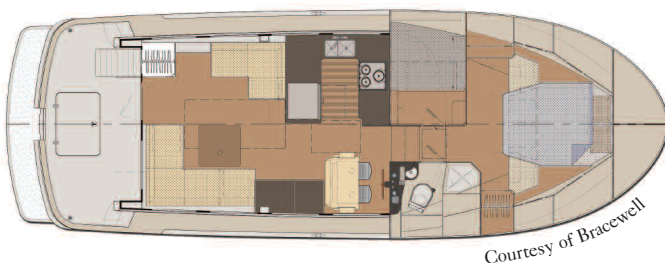
If two essential components of Bracewell's vision for the 41 are 1) Start with a tested and proven design and 2) Configure it for maximum function and livability, a third rule might read: Equip it as a fully turnkey cruiser. To that end, Bracewell has built a standard equipment list that's admirable for both its completeness and quality. In addition to the Stidd seat in the pilothouse, Bracewell has specified a Furuno NavNet 3D unit at each helm station and includes the 10-foot RIB tender with 15hp outboard as part of the package. Also standard are a 5kW generator (Northern Lights or Onan, at the customer's

Top left: A wide pedestal helm chair by Stidd stands atop a low platform, offering clear sight lines all around. Top right: The forward stateroom has been modified from the original design to increase its size while creating space for an adjacent second accommodation. Above: In the guest cabin, the double berth tucks under the galley sole to leave room for a washer/dryer unit.

BRACEWELL 41

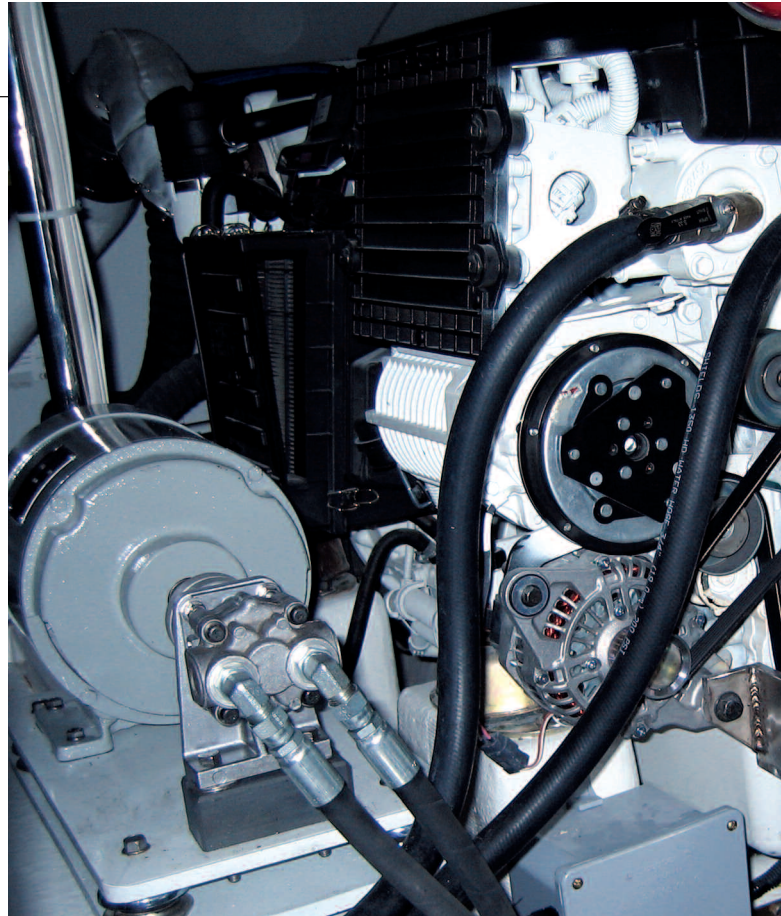
LOA	41'
LWL	38' 7"
BEAM	14'
DRAFT	3' 9"
DISPLACEMENT	28,000 lb. (half load)
BRIDGE CLEARANCE	13' 6" (mast down)
FUEL	400 U.S. gal.
WATER	200 U.S. gal.
HOLDING TANK	42 U.S. gal.
GENERATOR	5kW Northern Lights or Onan
ENGINE	435hp Volvo Penta D6
MAXIMUM SPEED	17 knots
CRUISE SPEED	8-15 knots
RANGE AT CRUISE SPEED	1,250nm at 8 knots (with 10% reserve)
DESIGNERS	Brad Miller; Lance Bracewell
BUILDER	Bracewell Boatworks
PRICE AS TESTED	Can\$672,500

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discretion), an automatic shorepower system and inverter/battery charger, and a TracVision receiver for the onboard entertainment system.

Consistent with its mission of delivering an extended cruising range, the 41 features a 400-gallon fuel capacity, a VacuFlush head system with a 42-gallon holding tank, and a Hurricane II hydronic heating unit that allows

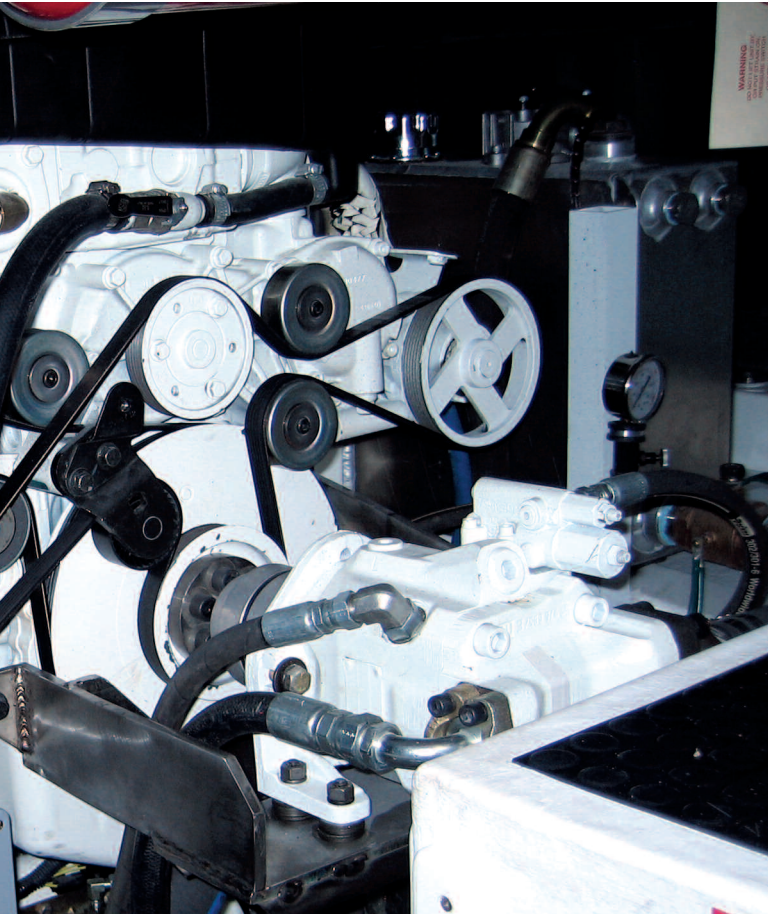


forays into northern latitudes. A true believer in the power and reliability of hydraulic systems, Bracewell also has installed, in addition to the tender davit, a hydraulically driven anchor windlass and bow thruster. Leveraging that capability still further, hull number 1's owner specified a nonstandard hydraulic crane, mounted at the transom, for pulling heavy shrimp and crab pots. For all its standard features, the 41 currently comes in at Can\$672,500, an attractive price for a well-found cruiser in its size range.

ON-THE-WATER CONFIDENCE

Evidence of the Bracewell 41's capabilities emerged during a recent passage from the Richmond boatyard to Vancouver Island and Nanaimo, B.C. Originally a coal-mining center, today Nanaimo is a hub for tourism, transportation, and the forest products industry. With its many marinas and waterways, the city serves as a convenient stopover for northbound cruiser traffic, and its scenery, fishing, and historic attractions make it a worthy destination in its own right.

Upon exiting the placid south channel of the Fraser River near Steveston, the yacht's owner guided his charge to a northwesterly heading, with moderate southerly winds stirring up a 2- to 3-foot chop. The combination of course and wind direction resulted in a quartering sea over most of the 30-mile crossing, a good test of the boat's course-keeping behavior. As promised, the 41 acquitted herself well against persistent lateral deflection, requiring only normal, prudent attention to



the helm and, as steering that day was strictly manual, presumably offering little challenge to a properly calibrated autopilot.

Standard power on the Bracewell 41 is a single 435hp Volvo Penta D6 diesel. So equipped, the vessel achieves a cruise speed of 14–15 knots; on that breezy, choppy test day, she topped out just shy of 17 knots. The flared bow sections only occasionally permitted spray to reach the windshield or side windows, and the curved sweep of the windshield sections created a venturi effect that prevented even a hint of draft inside, even with the side door fully open.

Once inside the marina at Nanaimo, the owner adroitly eased his new boat alongside the dock, while his crew deployed lines and enjoyed the singular luxury of securing fenders to dedicated hangers positioned along the gunwale, a welcome alternative to the more common practice of overloading midship cleats with multiple spring lines in addition to fender lines. While grabrails along either side of the flybridge coaming were noticeably absent on hull number 1, the builder declares that subsequent units will be so equipped. Otherwise, access along both side decks, guarded as they are by stout, thigh-high railings of stainless steel, feels secure and reasonably uncrowded.

The engine room has been designed to provide immediate access to the most commonly used components, with the inverter, generator, and fuel panel within easy reach of the primary entry point, a hatch in the saloon sole between the galley and helm area. The

Left: The single Volvo diesel leaves ample space for an inverter, water heater, hydraulics, and other systems, with room left over for customer-specified add-ons. Above: Cruise speeds in the mid-teens make short work of longer transits; in displacement mode, the Bracewell 41 achieves its greatest range.

main engine itself is easily accessed for fluid checks and maintenance, a compelling endorsement for the single-diesel installation, which, in addition to allowing adequate elbow room for performing service tasks, leaves ample space for a good number of owner-specified extras.

Indeed, the owner says that Bracewell's flexibility and willingness to incorporate his suggestions into the finished product clinched the deal. "I like the 41 for its storage and for the way the pilothouse is integrated into the main cabin to keep people together," he says, "but in this case, it's more like I chose the people in the company—their culture of customer service—more than the boat or the brand."

Rather than debate the semantics of the Bracewell 41 as a new boat or a renewed one, a serious cruising enthusiast might instead prefer to contemplate its merits per se. But one should also consider the thought processes and experience that have driven its design, construction, and fit-out. Either way, Lance Bracewell's Richmond boatyard presents cruisers an intriguing choice in the Bracewell 41. 