

CHARACTER BOAT FOR OCTOBER

"She's not elaborate but she has everything we want in a family cruising launch". So says Sonny Sibun owner of the 42 foot bridge deck cruiser 'Centaurus'. And a comfortable cruiser she is being 42 foot overall and having a beam of 13 feet. Interior spaciousness is the emphasis with accommodation designed for six adults.

The vessel was built by the Chas Bailey yard in 1968 and this was the 100th year of boat-building for that renowned firm. This century of turning out numerous work and pleasure boats has been incorporated in this boat's name — coupled with Sonny's zodiac sign, Taurus, hence, Centaurus. Apparently this was the last pleasure craft built by Bailey.

Following ownership of several launches previously, Sonny designed the general lines of the vessel himself in close co-operation with the then Bailey's foreman, Gil Powell. Sonny had quite a job convincing the builders that a 13 foot beam was not excessive as in those times, 11 or 12 foot was considered quite adequate for a boat of this length. As the photo shows she follows the long time cruising concept of a bridge decker but is much more rounded in appearance and carries the main saloon well aft to provide tons of room in that area.

The Kauri timber was acquired and milled at Thames for the planking which is finished at one and a half inches. All of the couchwork is in teak and the interior furniture and fittings in oak. A glimpse into the engine compartment and bilges reveals exceptionally strong construction with very heavy engine beds and close spaced ribs. A further look at the bilges reveals dry dust in the very bottom parts with no trace of water having ever been there.

She was originally intended to be powered by

two ford 100 diesels but as they were at that time in very short supply, a Cummins V6 215hp was acquired and installed driving through a 2-1 Borg Warner bear box. This gives a service speed of 9-10 knots at a comfortable 1800 R.P.M. and a top speed of 12 knots. Naturally this is not considered fast these days but speed was not the essence of this design. On board Centaurus everything smacks of professional workmanship and quality. It is good to see well made and varnished wooden rails right around this ship. A lot more maintenance than stainless steel but definitely easier on the eye.

The interior gives a tremendous feeling of spaciousness and order. The forward cabin consists of two bunks coming to a vee with drawers under. After of the bunks is a large two door wardrobe and opposite further drawers plus a cabinet in which is housed the radio-telephone. Forward of this cabin are the chain lockers with access through two large doors. Up two steps to the main saloon which is the focal part of the ship. The controls and wheel are to starboard and a single helmsmans seat of comfortable proportions behind. Four large bunk settees two on each side, form the seating arrangements with the table at the rear of the cabin to port. There are further drawers also at the rear of the saloon and it is Sonny's idea that each of the designed six people accommodated have two drawers each. On the forward side opposite the wheel is the traditional cocktail cabinet — nicely stocked I noticed.

Four steps lead down to the galley area and again there is room to spare. There is a large 'U' shaped stainless steel bench with pressure hot and cold water on tap. A full size gas stove and oven of kitchen proportions is fitted on one end of the 'U' and a large compressor-run fridge on

the other. A large sliding glass window is let into the bulk head between the galley and the aft cockpit ensuring that not only does the cook have adequate light to work by but can see what is happening in the fishing department at the same time. Opposite the galley is the head which along with the usual amenity (electric flush) is a large vanity unit. Next to this aft is the compartment designed to be a shower but has been turned into a walk-in pantry.

Aft of the galley and up a couple of steps is the cockpit roomy enough for any group of fishermen. Set into the floor above the exit steps from the galley is a deep freeze compressor driven. The cockpit contains two full length seats which could easily be bunks as there is sliding glass down each side and of course a removable cockpit cover. The sliding glass and cover convert the space into either an open cockpit or a virtual aft cabin — a very sensible arrangement.

Access to the under floor motor is achieved by either lifting the steps leading into the forward cabin or the galley which is enough for normal service or by lifting the hinged floor of the main cabin for full access. An interesting feature of the soundproofing effort gone into the boat is the main cabin floor. It is approximately seven inches thick but has a four inch air space in the centre and this proves most effective in dampening engine noise.

Any faults Sonny? No boat is perfect and there are some changes I would like to make to the interior in hindsight but nothing major. She knows how to throw the water around though and the screen wipers get a fair bit of use.

All in all a solid traditional type cruiser with not a scrap of fibreglass in sight and the envy of many eyes.

