

American Tug 34

WITH ITS OWN BLEND OF TUG STYLING AND LUXURIOUS ACCOMMODATIONS, THE AMERICAN TUG 34 IS AN IMPRESSIVE ENTRY INTO A POPULAR MARKET.



The purposeful-looking American Tug is most efficient at 10 to 12kts, but it can step up to 18kts when called upon.

PETER VASSILOPOULOS PHOTO

american tug 34

LOA	34'5"
Beam	13'3"
Draft	3'5"
Displacement (light)	18,000 lbs
Fuel	333 Imp. gals (1514 L)
Water	125 Imp. gals (568 L)
Power	330hp Cummins diesel
Price as tested	\$317,000 US

Built by
Tomco Marine Group Inc.

La Conner, WA
360-466-9277

Sold by
Canmar Yacht Sales,
Richmond
604-273-2226

THERE WAS a time when I considered the idea of buying a tug. I dreamed of a seasoned working vessel, one that was well enough maintained to allow conversion into a cruising vessel with only minimal effort. But then reality set in—I'd be faced with a major project, and I'd likely end up with a lot of boat but relatively little living space. Coastal tugs of moderate size are packed to the gills with engine and gear and this, I decided, wouldn't do.

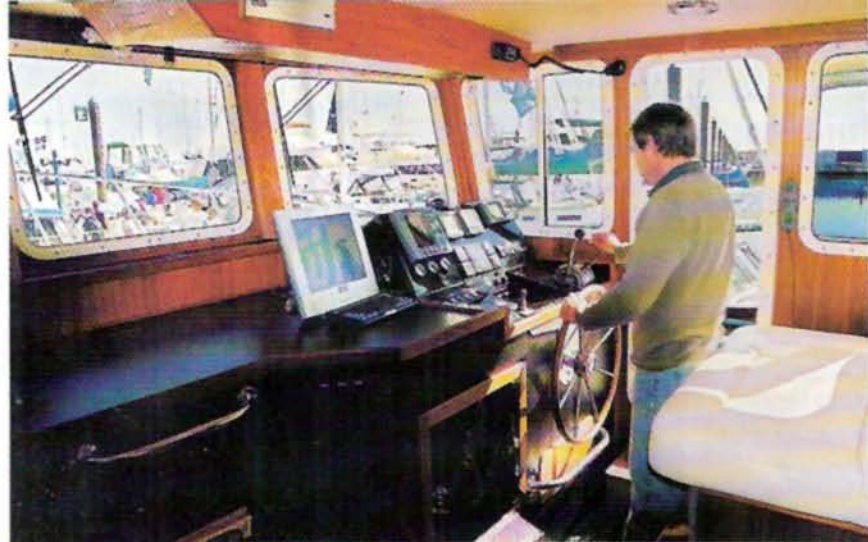
It's obvious that other people have entertained similar ideas, only where I quit thinking about it, they went the next step. And so was born the concept of the tug-styled cruising boat. There are various builders known for this type of boat, including some which are familiar to most mariners. A newcomer in the field, and one that has lately attracted considerable attention, is American Tug, based in La Conner, Washington and founded by former Nordic Tug president Tom Nelson. American Tug's cruisers are particularly interesting thanks to their robust construction, impressive list of standard gear, and quick, seakindly semi-displacement hulls.

CONSTRUCTION, DESIGN The American Tug is built to heavy duty specifications with lots of 'glass, careful construction and fine finishing. The hull is laid up to a 1/2" thickness at the bottom, tapering above the waterline. The laminate incorporates vinylester resin for blistering resistance and a premium gelcoat for a glossy, durable finish. Stringers are fabricated as part of a modular grid insert that is bonded into the hull, simultaneously establishing a base for the bulkheads and interior modules. Tight tolerances ensure that all components installed on this base fit precisely, and this is reflected in the excellent fit and finish of the interior.

The superstructure is a single piece, lowered onto the finished hull after the bulkheads and basic interior modules are in place. Combined with the robust hull and bonded stringer module, this gives the American Tug great integrity and strength.

The design of the American Tug 34 is distinguished by a decorative funnel, and a slight reverse slant to the windshield with a rakish eyebrow. The wheelhouse is stepped

The 34's pilothouse (right) has seating for four and an impressive dash. The galley (lower right) features a large countertop and plenty of gear. In the forward cabin is an island queen berth.



up from the saloon level, and a spacious forward stateroom occupies the forecabin. But this vessel only looks "rug-like" from the outside—the interior is luxury cruising boat all the way, with features and touches experienced boaters will really appreciate (for example, the funnel serves to provide headroom above the pilothouse steps). The overall lines of the American Tug make it seem larger than life. It's 34'5" long, but has a high sheerline, and the 13'3" beam is generous for a boat of this size.

EQUIPMENT, POWER Hardware on the American Tug is uniformly top quality. Fittings such as the sundeck ladder and the sturdy deck railings are made of premium type 316 stainless. The bow roller is polished stainless, feeding a standard Lofrans Tigres anchor windlass with 275' of 5/16" high-test chain and a 33 lb Bruce anchor.

Other nice surprises in the standard inventory include a bow thruster, a taste/odour filtration system on the galley sink, fluorescent engine room lights, and an automatic fire extinguisher in the engine room. As well, there's a stainless steel davit on the swimstep, two portable fire extinguishers, fenders, mooring lines and a ship's bell. The cockpit features a large deck box with a gas-assisted lifting lid and a substantial gasket to prevent water from leaking in. Inspection hatches provide access to every part of the boat that might conceivably need attention.

The engine room is accessed via two floor hatches in the pilothouse. Standard power is a turbo-charged Cummins 330 5.9 litre Diamond series engine, which comes with a six-year warranty. A twin disc reduction gear gives a drive ratio of 2.5 to 1, and the prop shaft is fitted with a dripless seal. A 370hp version of the Cummins 5.9 litre is optional. The engine room is neat and tidy with easy maintenance access and generous soundproofing. Standard equipment includes a 5kw Onan generator with electronic controls. Exhaust from the main engine is plumbed through the bottom of the hull alongside the engine, with a bypass through



the side of the hull to relieve pressure buildup when idling.

ACCOMMODATIONS You board the American Tug from the stern via a large swim step and transom door. The saloon incorporates a lounge to port and galley to starboard. An L-shaped settee in the lounge converts to a double bed, with storage below. A teak hi-lo table lowers in stages to serve as either a bed or coffee table. The five saloon windows have pleated blackout/privacy shades, and three of them can be opened and are fitted with screens. On cooler days a 1500-watt 110V electric heater will drive off the chill while you enjoy music from the AM/FM CD player. The owners of both boats I viewed also had flat screen DVD players installed. The decor features nicely finished teak woodwork and cabinetry, ultra-leather upholstery and high grade carpeting in a choice of colours.

The galley is equipped with a microwave, 6.8cu-ft Novakool refrigerator/freezer and three-burner stove with oven (either propane or 110V). The large Granitecoat countertop (similar to Corian) has two integral sinks. A trash compactor is optional, as is a washer/dryer (the latter is fitted in the aft locker). Under the saloon sole is a large storage area, thanks to a removeable floor above the prop shaft.

The forward owner's cabin features a queen-sized island bed, teak-trimmed




lockers, a large cedar-lined hanging locker with automatic lighting, stainless opening portholes with screens and a screened overhead hatch. There are halogen reading lights, courtesy lights and a quiet-running 750-watt 110V heater.

The ensuite head is located to starboard off the after end of the cabin. Lots of teak and a teak-inlaid sole are complemented by a Granitecoat counter. The full-size shower stall has a high-mounted porthole to provide light and venting.

The pilothouse offers two double seats (with the captain's seat on sliders) with access between them to the aft cabin. Access to the forward cabin is through a companionway on the port side. Beneath the seats are useful cabinets with deep drawers. Hinged, watertight doors open at either side of the house, each with a drop window. The forward side-windows and rear windows also slide open and are screened.

The impressive dash includes a raised section for computer screens and such, and an overhead panel for mounting electronics in line of sight. Navigational electronics are owner-selected, but typically include a GPS/plotter, autopilot, radar and depth sounder. A large flat top accommodates a



portable computer and serves as a chart table, with a lift-up panel providing access to a recessed chart storage area. Valuable features include toolbox steps at either door, a windshield defogger system, a flush-mounted backlit compass, two 12V outlets and one 110V outlet, a pair of stereo speakers and an Italian Stazo 24" teak-and-stainless helm wheel.

UNDERWAY Leaving the dock with builder Kurt Dilworth at the helm, I was delighted with the quiet purr from the engine room. Kurt deftly manoeuvred the boat out of an extremely tight slip—walking the boat sideways by using forward and reverse controls of the single screw in conjunction with the bow thruster. The American Tug ran at a comfortable 15kts when opened up to fast cruising speed, and accelerated to 18 wide open. But a cruising speed of about 10 to 12kts will produce the best combination of speed and fuel economy. Maximum range—over 1,250 miles—is achieved at about 8kts. The Cummins 330 runs at up to 2,800RPM and the 370 to 3,000RPM. Top recorded speeds are 18.2 and 19.7kts respectively.

We slowed to about eight and did a hard turn to starboard. I braced myself for the expected roll and was surprised to find the boat barely heeled as it came about in the tight manoeuvre. "She doesn't roll any more than that," said Kurt, "even when running at 18." And there are no stabilizers. The hull has a fine entry forward, a deep keel and five degree deadrise with a slight wedge before the transom. "The design of the chines contributes to the stability in turns," explains company president Tom Nelson. "She will plane quite easily, and at the same time give a soft ride with the bow slicing the waves."

IN CONCLUSION The American Tug is aimed at cruising couples, and in my view succeeds in practically every way. My wife Carla and I were equally impressed with the 34, and agreed if we were in the market it would likely be our choice. Certainly, the two owners we met were both beaming with pride and extremely happy with the builder. Both planned on heading to Alaska in their new boats, and one had follow-up plans to head to the Caribbean.

For more information contact Canmar Yacht Sales at 1-8100 River Road, Richmond, BC V6X 3A3, phone 604-273-2226 or fax 604-273-3167. The Web site for the builder is www.americantugs.com. ●