



HINCKLEY BERMUDA 40

ILLUSTRATION BY JIM EWING

The emergence of fiberglass in the late 1950s represented the beginning of a sea change in yacht design and construction. At the forefront stood an up-and-coming designer and a well-known builder of wooden boats. Both dared to go with the new technology, and the result was a National Sailboat Hall of Famer still regarded as one of the ablest and most beautiful boats in the pantheon: the Hinckley Bermuda 40.

With its narrow hull and ample overhangs, its yawl rig and centerboard/full keel bottom, the Bermuda 40 epitomized the Cruising Club of America rules governing yacht design at the time. Though not the fastest upwind, few could match her on the ocean racing circuit, where

the boats could reel off the nautical miles on a beam reach.

In 1958, designer William "Bill" Tripp Jr. had produced the Block Island 40, a successful fiberglass cruising sailboat. The Bermuda 40, commissioned for Maine builder Henry R. Hinckley Co., was a further evolution with a gentler spoon bow, a slightly flattened sheer and graceful overhangs. The result, wrote Jack Hornor, was the "quintessential example of Tripp's art and masterful eye for near-perfect balance."

It was Hinckley's first fiberglass boat, and he certainly picked a winner. But the builder's contribution came in combining the new technology with the old: The workmanship was first-class, and the in-

terior joinery spectacular. Some say the Bermuda 40 is a wooden boat inside a fiberglass one. (The builder also made the boat's spars and much of the hardware on-site.)

More than 200 boats were built during a 32-year production run, one of the longest of any fiberglass sailboat. Changes over the years improved its upwind performance by increasing the main mast's height and moving it aft, resulting in MKII (1968) and MKIII (1971). The Bermuda 40 is still prized by enthusiastic owners. A 50th anniversary rendezvous in Annapolis in 2009 drew 18 boats, including hull No. 1, Huntress, and hull No. 203, Highlands, the last one built.

— Steve Knauth