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Marlow Prowler 375



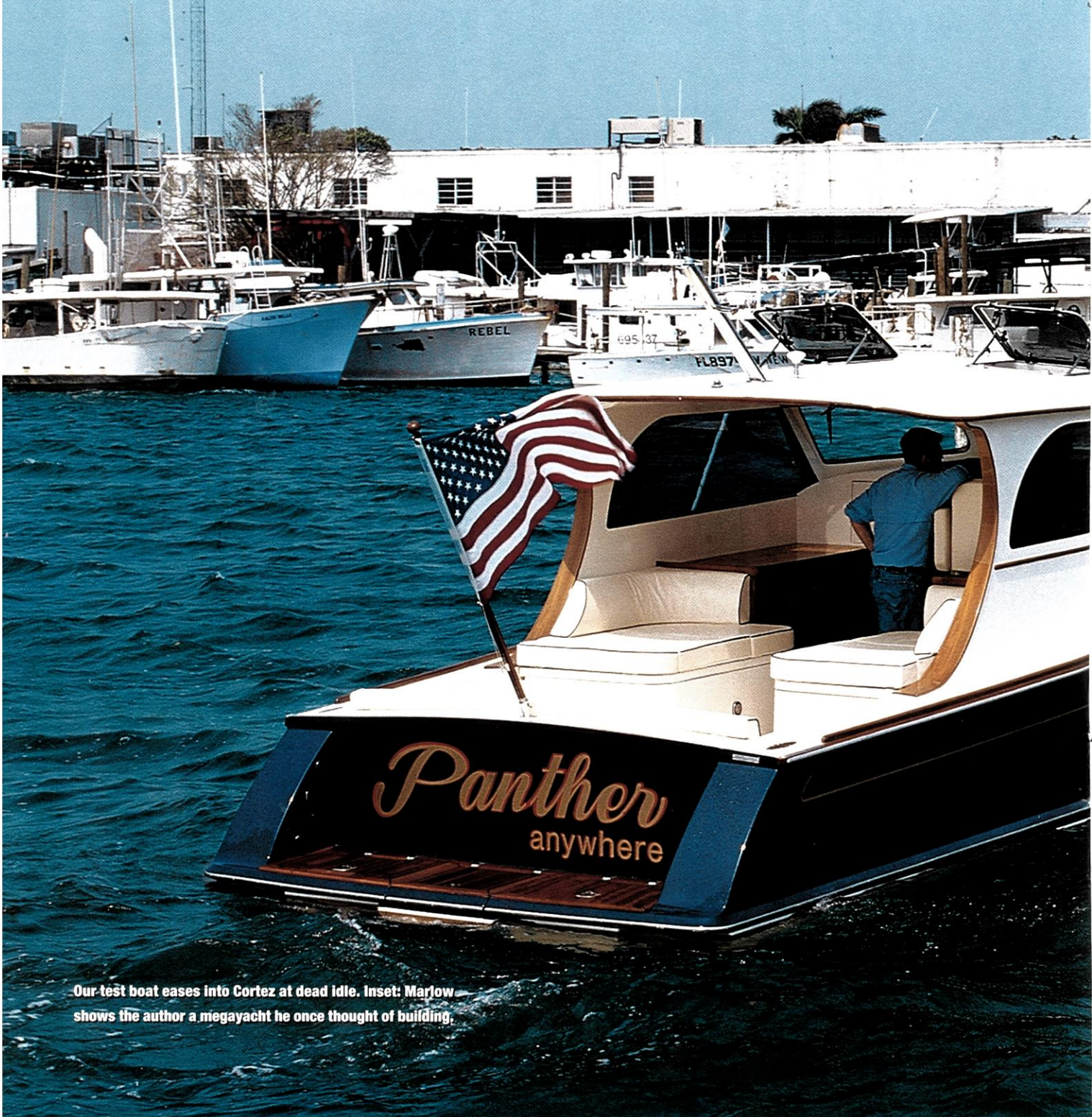
WITH MARLOW YACHTS...
You can go home again

EXCLUSIVE

PMY TESTED: MARLOW MARINE PROWLER 375

You Can Go

BOATBUILDER DAVID MARLOW RETURNS TO THE LITTLE

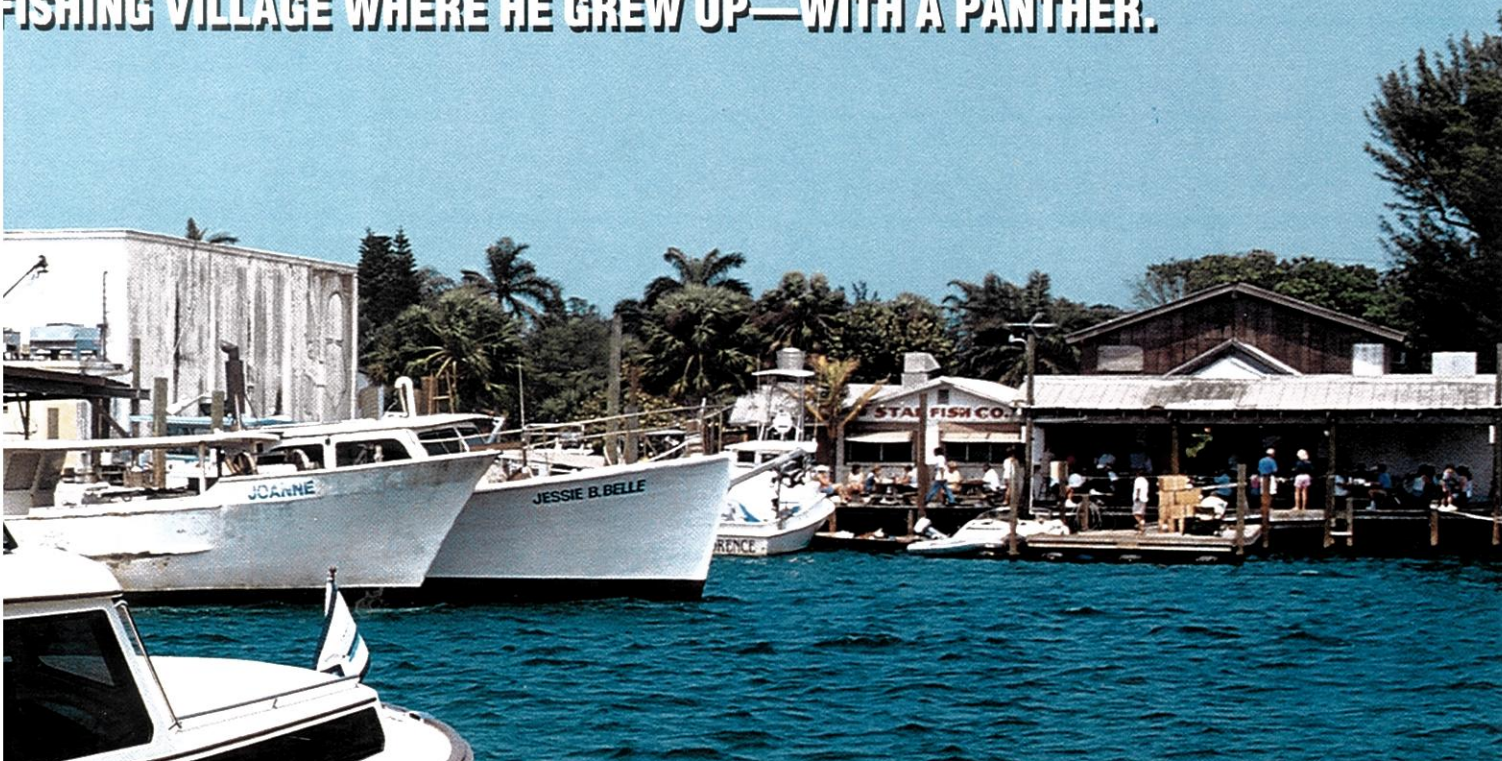


Our test boat eases into Cortez at dead idle. Inset: Marlow shows the author a megayacht he once thought of building.

By Capt. Bill Pike • Photography by Gary John Norman

Home Again

FISHING VILLAGE WHERE HE GREW UP—WITH A PANTHER.



I was sitting in David Marlow's pine-paneled office a year ago, looking out the window. It's a beautiful, park-like place, Marlow Marine, with royal palms, one of the oldest buttonwood trees on Florida's west coast, cracker-style tin roofs, and an ambiance of calm assurance. The shady, spring-fed lagoon at its center, which opens into the Manatee River, Terra Ceia Bay, and ultimately Tampa Bay, was chockful of yachts, including a sleek but husky Marlow Explorer 78 we'd just finished sea trialing for a boat test ("Sea Wolf," July 2004).

"Before you leave, Bill," said Marlow, motioning toward a drawing board, "Lemme show you our offering for next year's Miami boat show."

I got up to take a look. Labeled "Prowler—Panther Series 350 & 375," the drawing showed a couple of boats that departed significantly from the trawlerish appearance of the Explorer Series. Marlow explained that Prowler represented the fulfillment of a dream. As a boy growing up on the docks of the nearby





me an early-morning cup of joe, and then offered our plan for the day: We'd take the boat to Cortez, do our wringout en route, and then lunchify at a Cortezian waterfront restaurant called Star Fish Company, which adjoins the A.P. Bell Fish & Ice Company, an outfit Marlow once worked for. Besides sustenance, the point of the repast was to hook up with some of Marlow's old friends and associates, to see what they thought of *Panther*. But things tend to go slow in Cortez, Marlow

Calvin Bell of A.P. Bell Fish & Ice Company took some time to swaps yarns with Marlow, a long-time friend.

warned, so he was thinking we should quickly tour the boat before we hit the trail. Otherwise time might run short on the other end.

fishing village of Cortez, he'd admired the tough, racy vessels that smuggled Cuban rum into Florida for fun and profit. Boats like Capt. Jesse Haven's low-slung, Cortez-built *Green Lizard* and others from Wheeler, Consolidated, Matthews, and Gar Wood were the superstars of Marlow's young imagination, a world away from the stolid fishing vessels he was consigned to work on. They had fire-breathing Kermath and 12-cylinder Packard engines. They had broad-shouldered hull forms for carrying crated bottles as well as booze-friendly Monel tanks. But more, they had precisely what the colorful rogues who drove them had: style. Little wonder the ten-year-old Marlow, slaving away as "the kid" on the five-man mullet boat *Jewel Ann*, vowed someday, somehow, to own a vessel with as much flash, performance, and utility as the rumrunners he so admired.

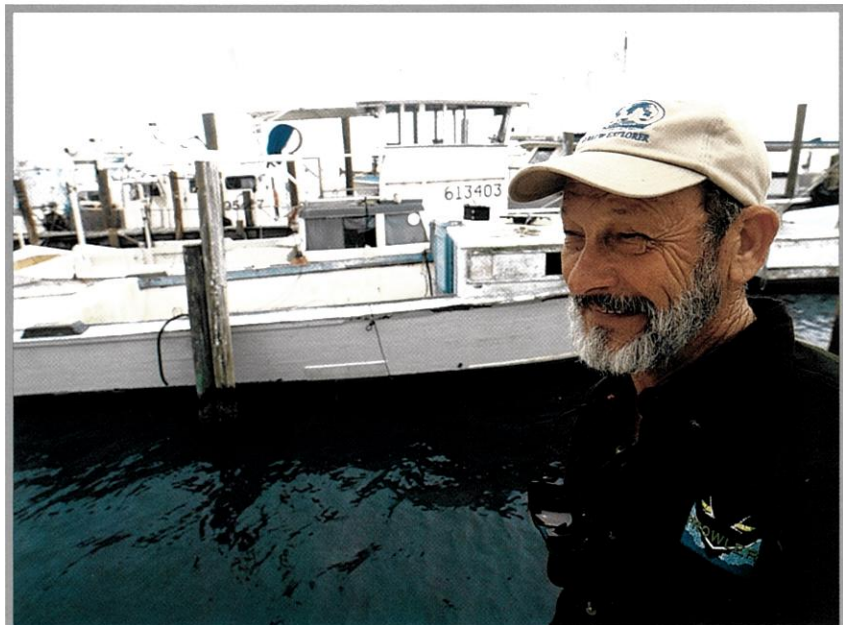
We began with the engine boxes, each of which housed a 359-hp Yanmar 6LYA-STP V-drive diesel under an electrically actuated lid that doubled as a settee. I'd seen many of the niftier details inside the boxes during previous tests of Explorers. They included drip pans under the engines, a common drain system to cut back on through-hull fittings, an Awlgrip finish, and a varnished teak grating in the bilge. Other nifty details outside the boxes include a fully baffled, fire-retardant fiberglass fuel tank (gelcoated outside and inside to nix algae buildup), four 8D AGM batteries (two house and two starters) in fiberglass stowage boxes, a stainless steel potable

I returned to Marlow Marine just after this year's Miami International Boat Show. No longer a compilation of lines on paper, the first of the Prowler Yachts, the Panther 375, was now in the water, docked stern-to. The name on her tumblehome transom: *Panther*. Her hailing port: anywhere.

I was charmed. Her sheerline was subtly S-curved and highlighted by a Burmese teak toerail. Stainless steel strips gleamed brightly along her molded-in quarterguards, and a raft of huge, flush-fit, tempered-glass windows adorned the low, off-white superstructure.

Marlow was waiting. He helped get my test gear into the ample cockpit, handed

Marlow with his alma mater, the ol' *Jewel Ann*, in the background.



water tank, highly polished inside to nix aftertaste, and hatch access to V-drives and CentaFlex flexible shaft couplings underneath the engines.

As for her interior, our test boat's layout was typical of most "sleeps two comfortably and three in a pinch" weekenders, meaning the owner's suite, with convertible dinette and head, was below decks, and the galley, helm station, and sunning areas were above. However, within the confines of this prosaic configuration, Marlow had added some poetry. The level of finish was striking. The stainless steel wheel, for example, was literally coated with numerous exquisitely joined teak pieces, and all drawers onboard were dovetail-cornered with ball-bearing-type stainless steel slides. Door hardware and faucets were premium grade. And the amount of elbowroom, especially below decks, was tremendous, thanks in large part to the boat's longitudinally framed, monocoque-type construction, which replaces a profusion of stringers and transversals with exceptionally intricate



This view of *Jewel Ann* shows the companionway to a cabin where five fishermen slept and ate for weeks.

tooling and high-tech composite sandwiches.

I fired up *Panther's* engines and, despite the proximity of other vessels in the crowded lagoon, smoothly maneuvered away from the dock, negotiated some narrow, rock-sided canals, and headed for open water. Close-quarters handling was easy; the boat's low profile cut windage, and there was enough bite in the props to pivot the boat efficaciously. No bow thruster was installed, and none was needed.

Handling offshore was fun, although bow rise coming out of the hole briefly obscured my vision forward, and maintaining good sightlines in that direction once we were on plane entailed stretching my neck a bit. Top speed in two- to four-foot seas was 40.6 mph, which was impressive considering our high rpm readings, probably due to underpitched props. Turning was sporty, and *Panther* tracked like she was sent for. The only foibles I noticed were a tendency to take water over the bow occasionally when charging

Beneath the patina of age, the lines of this old fishing boat in Calvin Bell's backyard are subtly visible in the Marlow Prowler series.





Our test boat's top speed of 40.6 in two- to four-foot seas was sporty but might have been sportier had there been just a tad more pitch in her props.

up-sea and sound levels that were high, most likely because our boat was a prototype with virtually no sound insulation.

We hit Cortez at noon with Marlow at the controls. Local knowledge, he'd advised when we first sighted the place, was necessary in these parts. The bottom near the shoreline was rife with old, uncharted, broken-off pilings lurking below the water's surface. Since the last thing I wanted to do at the time was tangle our props up with a chunk of waterlogged wood, I handed the helm over.

It was a savvy move. Despite our slithery 2'3" draft, we pulled a long trail of mud into the lee of Star Fish Company's front porch, which was just a tad overrun with tourists when we arrived. Marlow and I went ashore to sample the Cortez Fish Chowder, which was superb. We also kept an eye peeled for some of Marlow's friends.

"Cortezians are numerous here and they all have nicknames," Marlow noted, "Trigger Mora, Bub Bell, his brother Calvin, Popeye Lewis, Burr Lewis, Farmer Capo. Somebody'll be along."

He was right. Calvin Bell fell by, an old but exceptionally well-preserved gentleman who's

one of the owners of the A.P. Bell Fish & Ice Company. He'd known Marlow for years. A sea story or two ensued. Just a sample:

"You remember the time my brother Grady and I were fishin' together," Marlow queried, raising an eyebrow, "and we hit a log off the ol' Tides Hotel in the middle of the night and stove a hole in the boat?"

"Sure 'nough do," enthused Bell.

"And I was sleepin' below and Grady come down and yelled, 'David! Either you're gonna drown or I'm gonna drown

The rum-running style of the 1940's and early 1950's is evident below decks.

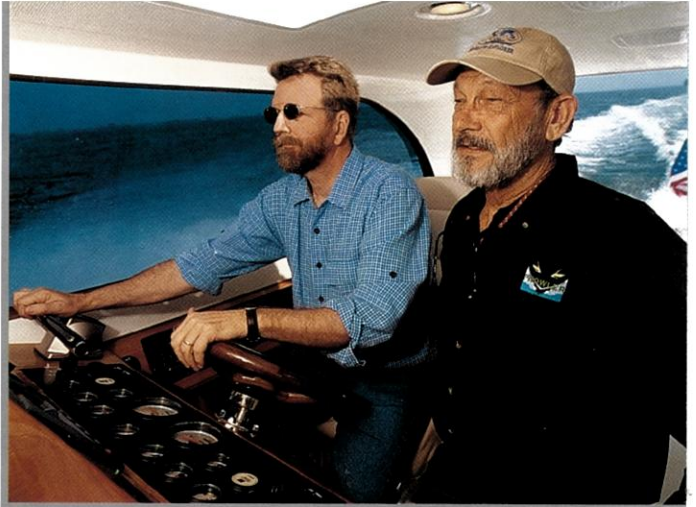


ya...but yer jumpin' over the side and stuffin' that mattress in the hole!"

"An' you gotta realize, young fellow," Bell added as an aside to me, "them boys'd been fishin' all night, and there was sharks all over the place."

"I didn't want to jump...but I did," Marlow laughed. "Grady's a big boy...bigger 'n me...with arms like that!"

We left Cortez that evening in pea-soup fog. Since Marlow had a better handle on safely navigating the local waters, we decided he'd drive back, with me as lookout. Another savvy move? Yeah, but it didn't alter the fact that both of us were a bit dispirited. While Bell, arguably the most lively interview of the afternoon, had treated us to local lore galore, he had to return to work before producing what we'd come for—an official, home-grown opinion of *Panther*.



Left: Engine-box lids lift on actuators. Right: The author tests *Panther's* spunky handling as Marlow looks on.

A fish-house employee saved the day, though, a kid with a besmirched white apron, leaning on an old, beat-up, square-ended shovel. Just as we pulled away, he gave us a long look that both Marlow and I easily interpreted.

"Hey Mister," it said, "that sure is a pretty boat." ❦

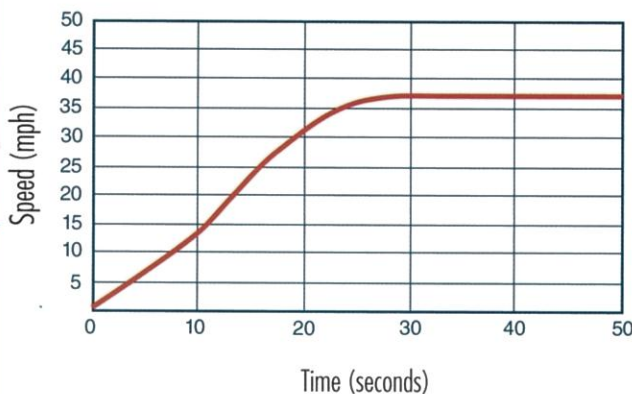
Marlow Prowler Yachts ☎ (800) 362-2657. www.prowler-yachts.com.

For additional photos, visit our Web site at powerandmotoryacht.com/webfeatures.

pmy tested: Marlow Marine Prowler 375

| RPM | MPH (KNOTS) | GPH | MPG (NMPG) | SM RANGE | NM RANGE | DECIBELS | TRIM (DEGREES) |
|------|-------------|------|-------------|----------|----------|----------|----------------|
| 1000 | 9.8 (8.5) | 2.2 | 4.45 (3.87) | 1403 | 1220 | 75 | 0.5 |
| 1500 | 11.1 (9.7) | 7.0 | 1.59 (1.38) | 500 | 434 | 79 | 2.5 |
| 2000 | 23.3 (20.3) | 14.0 | 1.66 (1.45) | 524 | 456 | 82 | 4.0 |
| 2500 | 31.1 (27.0) | 21.0 | 1.48 (1.29) | 467 | 406 | 83 | 4.0 |
| 3000 | 36.5 (31.7) | 27.6 | 1.32 (1.15) | 417 | 362 | 85 | 4.5 |
| 3450 | 40.6 (35.3) | 39.6 | 1.03 (0.89) | 323 | 281 | 89 | 3.5 |

Conditions: temperature: 78°; humidity: 96%; wind: 10-18 mph; seas: 2'-4'; load: 300 gal. fuel, 50 gal. water, 4 persons, 100 lbs. gear. Speeds are two-way averages measured w/ Stalker radar gun. GPH extrapolated from manufacturer-supplied data with assistance from Mastry Engine Center. Range: 90% of advertised fuel capacity. Decibels measured on A scale. 65 dB is the level of normal conversation. All measurements taken with trim tabs fully retracted.



Acceleration based on average of 4 reciprocal runs using Stalker ATS radar gun and OceanPC laptop.

Base price: \$350,000 with 2/315-hp Yanmar 6LPA-STP diesel inboards

Optional power: 2/359-hp Yanmar 6LYA-STP, 2/440-hp Yanmar 6LY2A-STP, 2/500-hp Yanmar 6CXM-GTE diesel inboards

Standard equipment: Maxwell rope/chain windlass; Manship coachroof hatches and foredeck hatch; Danforth compass; Vetus instrumentation; Exalto windshield wipers; Marlow helm chair; Tank Tender tank-monitoring system; U-Line refrigerator/freezer; 2-burner Kenyon cooktop w/ oven; Sharp convection/microwave oven; Schwepper door/cabinet hardware; Grohe Infinity fixtures; VacuFlush MSD; Kahlenberg air horn; Danish brass reading/cabin lights; 5-kW Onan genset; 16,000-Btu Marine Air A/C; 2/8D AGM cranking batteries; 2/8D AGM house batteries; 50-amp Newmar battery charger; Tides Marine dripless shaft logs; fiberglass fuel tank; s/s water tank; Fireboy-Xintex auto. fire-extinguishing system

SPECIFICATIONS

Length overall: 37'6"

Beam: 12'0"

Draft: 2'3"

Weight (half load): 16,000 lbs.

Fuel capacity: 350 gal.

Water capacity: 80 gal.

Test engines: 2/359-hp 6LYA-STP diesel inboards

Transmissions/ratio: ZF80-HV/1.52:1

Props: 19½x29 4-blade nibral

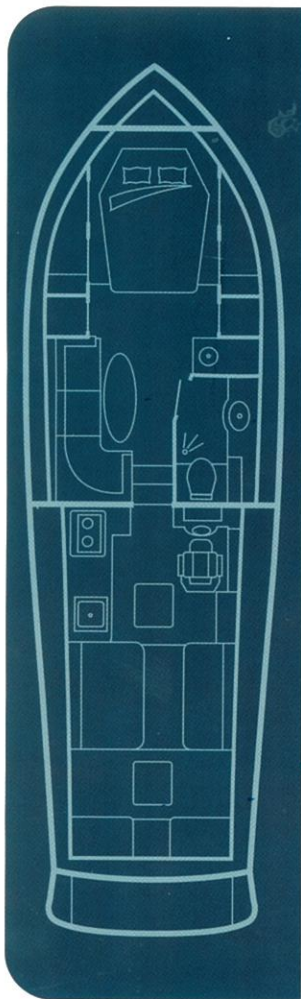
Steering: Hydraulic hydraulic

Controls: Morse electronic

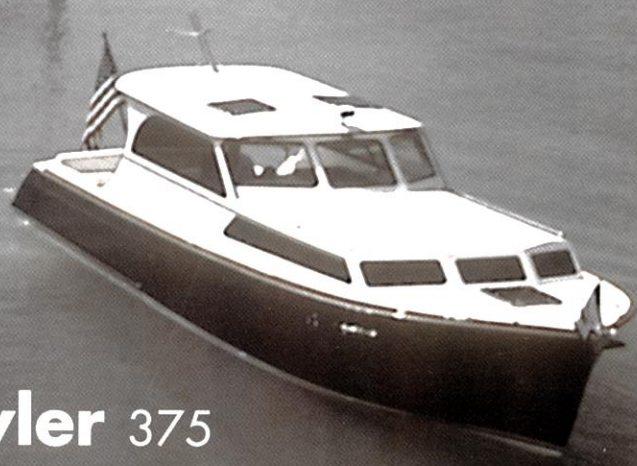
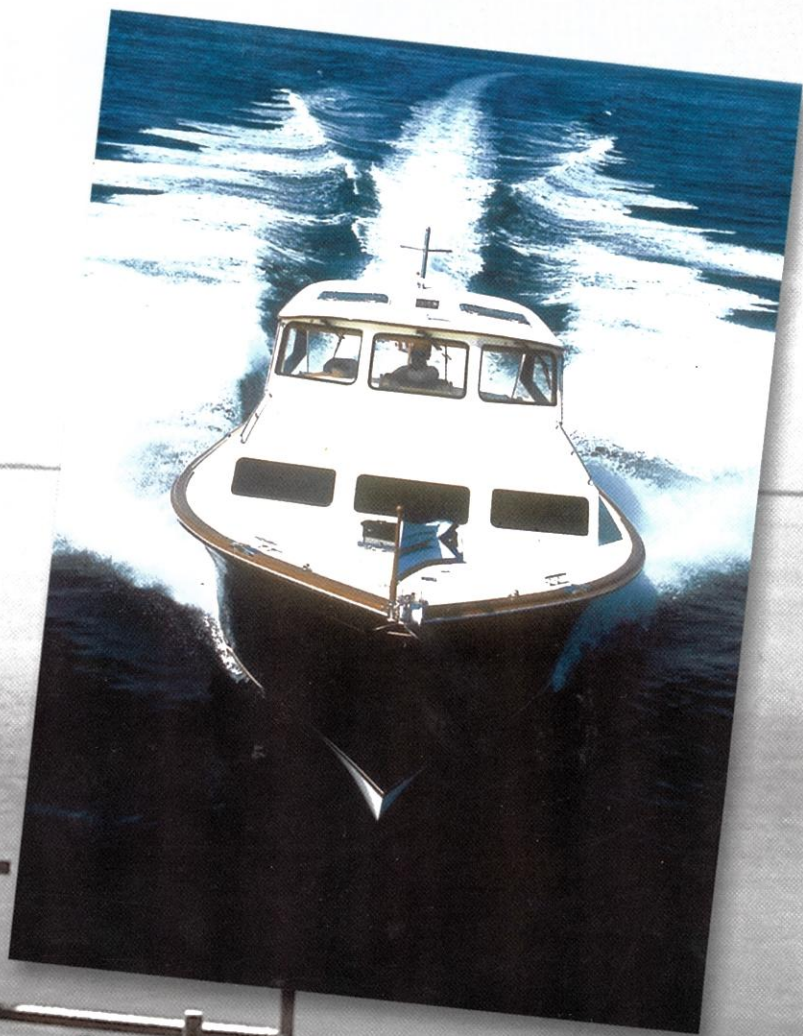
Optional equipment on test boat: Raymarine C80

GPS plotter; engine upgrade

Price as tested: \$385,000



TECHNICAL ILLUSTRATION: PAUL MIRTO



Marlow**Prowler** 375



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