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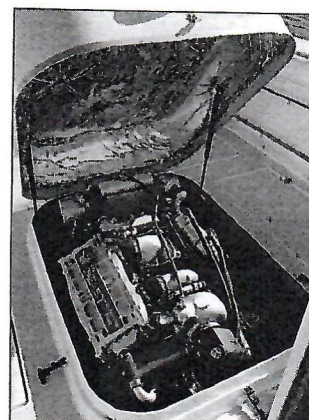
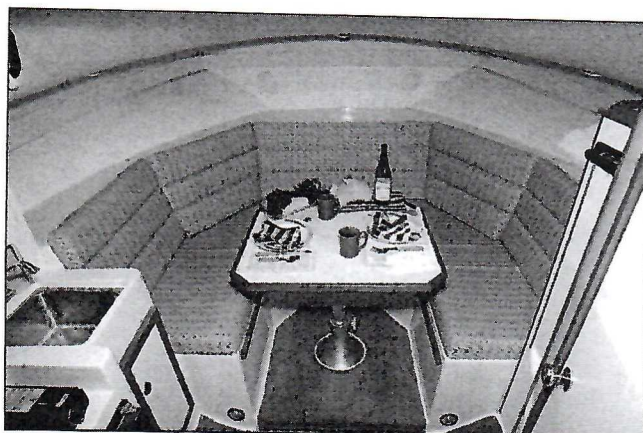
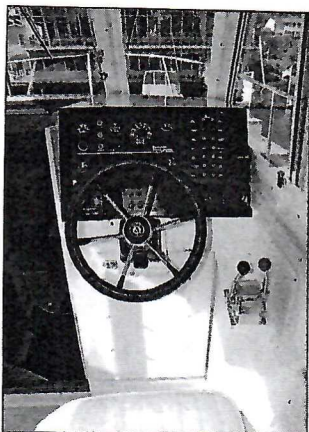


ALBIN 28 TOURNAMENT EXPRESS
A Fishing Machine For The Cruising Family

 **MURRAY
YACHT
SALES**



NORTHWEST EXPLORER: The Albin 28 cruises Puget Sound (opening spread), and stops at a scenic anchorage in Port Blakely (above).



INSIDE STORY: The 28's helm station, cabin, and engine box with GM/Peninsular diesel (left to right, above); its roomy cockpit (right).

The Albin 28 Tournament Express, a Downeast-style fishing boat that also makes a great family cruiser, looks like the sort of craft that's meant to be under way at dawn's first light. In fact, that was our plan.

This 28 looked particularly salty with its Bristol Green hull as it sat snugly docked in Bainbridge Island's Eagle Harbor, ready for our cruise down South Puget Sound to Gig Harbor. The pink glow of sunrise reflected off the snow-laden peaks of the Olympic Mountains to the west as we loaded up, pulled away and turned south toward Port Blakely. By the time the sun splintered its golden rays over the Cascade Mountains to the east, we had already eased past the ferry landing and were well under way.

In the early spring morning chill, we were happy to be cozily ensconced in the Albin's pilothouse, enclosed by an aft bulkhead with door (a popular Northwest option) and comfortably warmed by the heater (ditto), as we munched on homemade muffins. On the standard 28 (which normally

comes in white, with other options), the pilothouse is open aft.

On our 28, the glass panels surrounding the pilothouse provided exceptional views of the dramatic mountain panoramas sweeping past. Likewise, the big center-opening windshield afforded excellent visibility for the helmsman. The adjustable helm seat faces a standard tilt wheel and fold-down footrest for comfortable stand-up and sit-down driving alike. The dash gauges are neatly laid out, and there's plenty of room to mount electronics above. Forward of the companion seat is a chart table.

The 28 may have gotten its image as an early riser from Albin's legendary fishing exploits. The company was founded in Sweden nearly a century ago, when it began producing marine engines for the commercial fishing fleets. Today the New England-based builder's versatile, adaptable fleet of boats, ranging from 24-foot weekenders to 50-foot trawlers, can be found throughout the U.S., from the quaint harbors of the Northeast to the warm waters of Florida to the vast, sometimes inclement cruising grounds of the Pacific

Northwest. According to Albin, the popularity of the recently introduced 28 has already grown by leaps and bounds in the Southeast, and the enclosed pilothouse version, new to the Pacific Northwest, is starting to get the same sort of enthusiastic reception.

Though the boat is geared to fishing as well as cruising, our aim today was not to chase the schools of new spring Chinook salmon flashing nearby, but simply to enjoy gunkholing our way through some of Puget Sound's most unique anchorages. The Sound is a visual feast wrapped in conifers and trimmed with glaciers, and it was our intention to linger and savor this striking scenery whenever possible.

Yet for boaters short of leisure time, the Albin is a sprightly performer with the power to run at a good clip. Pushed by a standard 280-shp 400TA GM/ Peninsular V-8 diesel inboard, the 28 cruised comfortably at about 22 knots/3000 rpm, burning only 10 gallons of fuel per hour, and hit a top speed of around 26 knots/3600 rpm. The company also offers an array of other gas or diesel engine options, including stern drives.

At Blakely Rock we cut back to idle speed and turned west into the harbor. Formerly the site of the world's largest sawmill, fed by the great lumberjacks of the Pacific Northwest, Port Blakely was once lined rail-to-rail with tall ships loading lumber bound for ports all around the world.

Oversized cockpit

Even at idle the Albin handled well and ran smoothly, thanks in part to an engine trolling valve feature that allows the boat to drop from typical four-to six-knot idle speeds to truly slow one- to three-knot trolling speeds—a capability inspired by fishermen wanting to maintain trolling speeds for long periods. Those who do not want the trolling valve may opt to install a small 15-hp kicker. The non-outboard configuration allows for the optional swim step and walk-through transom door, popular for easy loading and unloading and for water access.

It was turning into a clear, crisp

Northwest day, and the morning sun began to warm us a bit as we stretched out in the 28's cockpit and toured the harbor, viewing its historic ruins while also taking note of the boat's topside features.

The oversized cockpit, with its fishing heritage, had room for everyone. Standard fishing features include a live well, two fish boxes, a tackle prep center, saltwater washdown, several rod holders and rod racks, and padded coaming bolsters, with the aft one doubling as a backrest for a fold-down bench seat. The engine box, which makes for easy access to the power plant, can double as an extra cockpit seat or serve as a convenient table. There's also room for a couple of deck chairs, and the freeboard is high enough to provide protection for small children on family cruises.

Despite the 28's full complement of nonsense fishing features, Albin has gone out of its way to prove that fishing is not its sole purpose. In fact, in the Northwest, says Albin dealer Murray Wasson, "Most of the people stepping into these boats aren't fishermen. Rather, they're people whose lifestyle or family requirements have prompted them to seek out a boat with more speed than a trawler, yet with the economy provided by a small diesel, coupled with low maintenance—and a boat that's safe in just about every condition the recreational boater might encounter."

Local dealer Fred Doeppke adds, "Albins are built to take a beating, to handle most conditions—fishermen will take them out in anything. But we also see a great many first-time powerboat buyers coming from sailboats. This is the kind of boat that appeals to a young family's needs. It has nice accommodations below for weekends or short excursions and a pilothouse where they can ride comfortably in any weather. Plus it offers the feisty performance and sportboat feel that some former sailors fear they might lose in a more stodgy motorboat."

Albin naval architect Terry Compton has produced a very seaworthy line of designs. An evolution of the builder's 24-, 25- and 27-foot models, the 28 Tournament Express has a modified-V hull with deep forefoot and 16-degree transom deadrise, plus a full-length keel with a protected skeg and rudder. The skeg design

helps deflect all the floating wood and tidal debris found in Northwest waters and, at slower speeds, reduces roll.

Crest to crest

Putting the boat to the test, we hit the throttle and sped south around Restoration Point toward Blake Island. The wind began to increase out of the north, kicking up a stiff chop. As it rode from crest to crest against an icy spray, the Albin tracked well at a fast cruising speed on the approach to the Island. Even in the heat of summer, Puget Sound, which plunges to 900-foot depths in spots, is a numbingly cold deep-water basin, and it's only minutes from hypothermia for anyone who lingers in its grasp. So naturally, we wanted to keep as dry as possible as the 28 blasted through the tidal rips—and we did, thanks to the extra buoyancy provided by the boat's flared bow and big 10-foot beam.

The wide, unobstructed side decks are fully lined by sturdy, stainless-steel rails, both on deck all the way forward and on the pilothouse top, providing solid handholds in tough conditions. To unclutter decks and promote surefootedness, the Albin also features recessed cleats, integrating the hardware into the sheer and eliminating the likelihood of catching your feet on the cleats.

Further testimony to the durability and quality of Albins are their construction methods and materials. The fiberglass hulls use both biaxial and unidirectional cloth for extra strength in strategic areas, with vinylester-blend resins and one-half-inch end-grain balsa coring. Decks are also balsa-cored for extra strength. Hardware includes bronze sea cocks and through-bolted stainless steel fittings with backing plates.

Soon we could see Mount Rainier beckoning up ahead, as the tides began clashing head-on with the wind and creating pockets of frothy, confused seas. We aimed straight up the channel and ducked into Blake Island's Tillicum Village harbor for shelter.

When it came to docking, any doubts

about the close-quarters maneuverability of this single-screw boat were laid to rest when its Vetus electric bow thruster (a recommended option for the single-engine configuration) countered prop torque and nudged us smoothly into the dock against a strong crosswind. This feature could also prove handy when you are trying to bring in a fish. In fact, says Albin, the thruster can make the single-screw 28—with its lower price and operating cost—easier to maneuver than a twin-screw version without thruster. The unit exerts 50 pounds of thrust with fingertip control.

A small, heavily wooded island at the fringe of South Puget Sound, Blake Island is a state park with beachside moorings and a network of forest trails. This was the spot where President Clinton and leaders of Japan, Australia, New Zealand, and the other Pacific Rim nations gathered last year for their first conference. Tillicum Village, with a traditional rough-timber Northwest Indian lodge complete with totem poles and a salmon-baking fire pit, is the main harbor. During the summer, it's packed with boaters from all over the Northwest eager to walk the beaches or set off on an adventure into the deep, dark woods. We decided to go ashore and check out the west headland, but didn't want to leave the boat for too long, as we were having too much fun exploring the Sound by water.

Back aboard the boat, before leaving the dock, we went below for some snacks. The 28's cabin, two steps down from the helm through a folding companionway door, is bright and airy, with an opening forward hatch, several opening, screened ports and a full 6'5" of headroom.

The boat comfortably sleeps four adults—two in a mid-cabin double bed

and two forward, where a high-low dinette table surrounded by a four-person U-lounge drops to form a queen-size bed. To port is a galley with deep stainless steel sink supplied with hot and cold water, microwave, single-burner propane stove, refrigerator/freezer, fold-out counter and teak-trimmed cabinets, and to starboard is an enclosed head with MSD and shower.

Harbor town

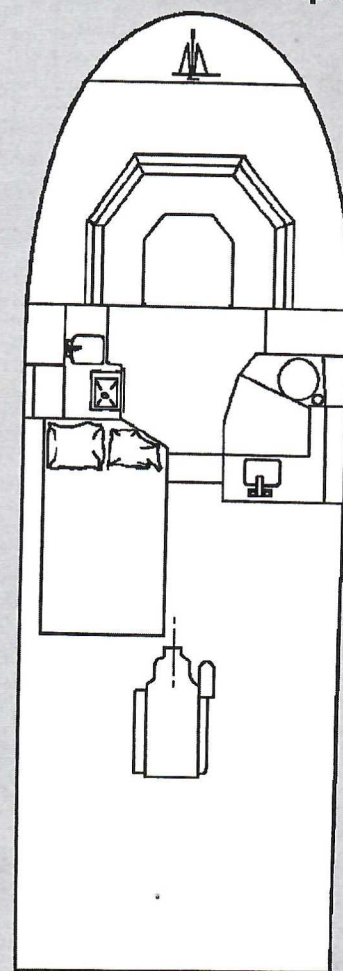
Above-decks we found the wind still blowing and kicking up the seas as we charged northward around the sand spit before turning south again toward Vashon Island. The island's west side has a steady north-flowing ebb which, with a brisk Northerly breeze, can push the chop straight up so we powered down Colvos Pass through the lumpy seas.

As we rounded Vashon's southern tip on the approach to Gig Harbor, Mount Rainier presented an awesome sight as it loomed up dramatically. A peninsula community, Gig Harbor is still home to many of the once-thriving commercial fishing fleet boats, and is lined with waterfront docks, restaurants, fishing supply shops, and historic buildings. The sleepy harbor town also offers great protection from bad weather.

The Albin 28 Tournament Express, with its traditional fishing boat profile combined with a sporty sheer and polished finish, looked right at home here, so it seemed an appropriate place to end our cruise.

Besides its handsome looks, the Albin 28, which is also available in an open version without the hardtop, is versatile enough to appeal to serious fishermen, weekend cruisers, family day-boaters and island commuters alike. It's also a great value. This just might be a classic in the making. ♪

Albin 28 Tournament Express



LOA.....	28'4"
Beam	10'
Draft.....	3'2"
Disp.....	8,500 lbs.
Water.....	36 gals.
Fuel.....	132 gals.
Power.....	(1) 280-shp GM/Peninsular
Cruise	22 knots
Fuel use at cruise	10 gph
Top end.....	26 knots
Albin Marine, Dept. MB&S, 143 River Rd., Cos Cob, CT 06807. (203) 661-4341.	

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