

like FATHER,

BY RICHARD THIEL

PHOTOGRAPHY BY ROBERT HOLLAND

The first boat bearing the Kroger name that I ever encountered was a Kady-Kroger 36 Manatee, a vessel so mundane in intent yet so iconoclastic in execution, she could only be called unique. Think of the Little Tugboat That Could with an enormous, airy, full-beam saloon as bright and inviting as your grandmother's sunroom. Powered by a wheezy little Volvo Penta diesel—our fuel-flow meters were almost larger than it—the Manatee was as lovable and slow as her namesake. She was also a helluva sea boat.

I was assigned to test the Manatee. I seem to recall a top speed of 5.6 mph, and I don't remember how much fuel she used except that if it had been any less, she would have been making it, not burning it. When my test was completed, I returned to the dock and showed my results to her designer, Jim Kroger, who immediately took issue with the top speed. "Five point six?" he roared. "No way! She'll do 5.75 any day of the week." I thought he was kidding, but I didn't know Jim. An hour later I was back out on the water, rerunning all the figures. Top speed this time? Five point seven five, on the nose.

It was then that I realized Jim Kroger's obsession with details. And even though he passed away five years ago, his son Kurt maintained that tradition with a line of dis-

placement cruisers and now the semicustom 49 Express, sold by a new company, Kroger Express Yachts. In two ways, the 49 is the antithesis of the Manatee. She's ruggedly handsome and surprisingly quick afoot. Yet her joinery, seakindliness, and conservative construction all echo the Manatee as well as the other Krogers.

This may be a semi-displacement yacht, but in the quest for speed, Kroger did not abandon its bluewater heritage. A bluff, broad bow and jaunty plumb stem not only provide a salty look but lots of sea-splitting efficiency and reserve buoyancy in a seaway. The hull is round-chined for a soft ride until about three-quarters aft, where the modest spray knocker—which starts at the stem as little more than a feature crease—metamorphoses into the hard chine that provides the lift required for double-digit speeds. A deep, full-length keel increases wetted surface and thus saps some speed, yet it improves directional stability and protects props and rudders.

Coupled with twin 350-hp Caterpillar 3116s, this hull produced a 20.8-mph top speed on our test boat with an 18-mph cruising speed at 2500 rpm. Although there was some bow rise as I applied power, the change was barely noticeable. Such a modest running angle keeps the finer foresections in the water, ensuring a smooth ride in deteriorated conditions.

Another reason for the flat running angle is the location of the engines: well forward, under the pilothouse. Since the props are in the conventional location, four-foot-long drive shafts are required to bridge the distance.

likeSON

OBSESSION WITH DETAILS IS A KROGEN FAMILY TRADITION,
AS EVIDENCED BY THE 49 EXPRESS YACHT.



To avoid induced vibration, Kroger specifies the Aquadrive system, which includes a damper to absorb driveline vibration and constant-velocity joints to accommodate misalignment. (Indeed, Aquadrive actually specifies that the drive line be slightly out of alignment to maintain constant tension on the system.) Propeller thrust is absorbed by a bearing whose case bolts separately to the stringers. Because the engines bear no thrust, extra-soft engine mounts can be used to further reduce vibration.

Having the engines under the pilothouse also yields an engine room with six-foot headroom plus accessibility to all mechanicals and maintenance points. But there is a disadvantage: The only way to pull an engine or genset (which nestles between the thrust bearings) is to drag it through a removable panel in the engine room's aft bulkhead, into the lazarette, and then up through the aft deck sole.

To ensure constant trim regardless of fluid load, twin 300-gallon fuel and 150-gallon water tanks are amidship and outboard of the engines. Everything—and I do mean everything—in the engine room is sheathed in perforated-aluminum acoustical insulation, which (along with an underwater exhaust system) works well, as our sound-level readings at the bridge helm never exceeded 76 dB-A. Access to this space is via a watertight door on the accommodations level, but a hatch in the galley sole offers entrance to the aft compartment in which the genset and thrust bearings are located.

Spaciousness is not limited to the 49's mechanical spaces. Like the Manatee, the Express is dimensioned to ensure you and your guests never feel cramped. The cockpit is roughly 6½ feet long and uncommonly safe thanks to three-foot-high bulwarks. Full-length, 1½-foot-wide side decks are just as safe, being protected by a tall rail, a two-inch-high toerail, and plenty of handholds. The rail is welded on top but interference-fit to each stanchion for easy replacement.

Because of the elevation gain between cockpit and foredeck, side-deck steps are required, a foot-high one at the cockpit and a smaller one just forward of the port and starboard pilothouse doors. This somewhat slows fore-aft travel, but the foredeck is virtually flat and offers room for two to work rode and dock lines; two anchors nest comfortably on the two-foot-wide pulpit.



Top: On our test boat, the forward master stateroom was the main sleeping one. Center: The forward galley is U-shape with pilothouse access to port. Bottom: The pilothouse offers superb sightlines, side-deck access, and an elevated couch and table.

Nearly two feet off the deck, the house roof is also big, wide, virtually flat, and properly surfaced. A third small deck atop the pilothouse is perfect for holding horns, antennas, and such.

The 49's other major exterior space, the flying bridge, is accessible only from the pilothouse. The helm area is just eight feet wide, the remaining width taken up by narrow side decks that don't appear to be particularly useful. However, there is still room for a half-dozen passengers, and sightlines forward and to either side are excellent. The view aft is limited by the 12-foot-long aft deck. At 10 1/2 feet wide (the side decks below are not cov-



The comfortable flying bridge is accessible from the pilothouse.

ered by it), it has plenty of room for a tender and davit. A mast carries the radar (a safe and efficient seven feet off the deck) and flags and is hinged so it can dip for low bridges.

Unlike Krogen's displacement boats, which are finished in teak, the Express is all cherry, flawlessly crafted and finished. Being semicustom, the 49 offers a variety of plans, but basically you get an eight-foot-long saloon that's wrapped in glass on

three sides. Like every other interior space, it has extraordinary headroom: 6'9". Our test boat offered an L-shape couch and tri-fold dining table to starboard and two occasional chairs to port.

Forward and separated from the saloon by a waist-high partition, the U-shape galley has a single, deep sink aft, a four-burner Jenn-Air cooktop and separate oven to starboard, and full-size refrigerator forward. There are plenty of cabinets, a lovely round port on each side, and a beautiful bookcase on the port side, complete with removable sea rails. Also on the forward side are the electrical distribution panels, hinged for easy access. Inside, the wiring is so carefully routed and bundled, it displays the geometric beauty of a cubist painting.

The pilothouse is fully forward on this level and offers 270-degree visibility and good sightlines forward despite the 49's high bow. An elevated six-foot-wide benchseat and small table on the aft bulkhead can convert to a berth; our test boat had no seat for the helmsman. There's plenty of room for bracket-mounted electronics thanks to the expansive flat surfaces, and the main gauge panel flips open for both stowage and wiring access. A subpanel provides switches for lights, pumps, and the like.

Our test boat had two staterooms on the lower level, the forward a master with en suite head and stall shower plus a starboard space that functions as an office but with a couch that quickly converts to a double berth. A separate port-side head is at the foot of the companionway and so makes an ideal day head.

As I stepped off our 49 Krogen, I marveled at how different the Express is from the Manatee yet how much they share a common philosophy. Although I didn't have a chance to meet with Kurt Krogen, I realized that he, too, was much like his father. That being the case, I decided not to call him with the test results.

Krogen Express Yacht Company ☎ (561) 286-1149. Fax: (561) 286-7726. Reader Service No. 255.

PMY TESTED: KROGEN 49 EXPRESS

Base price: \$750,000 w/ 2/350-hp Caterpillar 3116TA diesel inboards

Optional power: 2/420-hp Caterpillar 3126TA diesel inboards

Standard equipment: Learner Concept 2 windlass; swim platform; 10 opening ports w/screens; cherry and holly sole throughout; washer/dryer; s/s

rudders; bronze seacocks; drippers shaft logs; Aqua-drive system; copper water pipe; Glendinning Coblenester; underwater exhaust

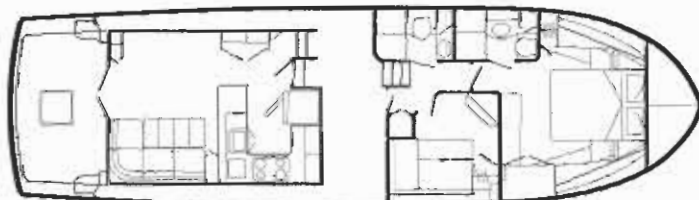
Construction: Hull: stitched Nitex w/Nitex core above waterline, solid FRP w/2 layers of vinyl ester resin below waterline; hot-section, solid-FRP stringers; Divinycell-core bulkheads; hull-to-deck joint

mechanically fastened and fiberglassed throughout

SPECIFICATIONS

LOA: 49'6"; **Beam:** 14'9"; **Draft:** 4'0"; **Maximum headroom:** 6'9"; **Weight:** 42,000 lbs.; **Fuel capacity:** 600 gal.; **Water capacity:** 300 gal.; **Test engines:** 2/350-hp Caterpillar 3116TA diesel inboards; **Transmission:** Twin Disc; **Ratio:**

2.0:1; **Props:** 26x22 four-blade Nitral; **Steering:** Hydraulic hydraulic; **Controls:** Mothes/MAC electronic; **Trim tabs:** Bennett; **Optional equipment on test boat:** none (semicustom boat)



RPM	MPH (KNOTS)	GPH	MPG (NA MPG)	SM RANGE	NA RANGE	DECIBELS
750	5.8 (5.0)	1.5	3.83 (3.33)	2,070	1,800	58
1000	8.3 (7.2)	2.4	3.50 (3.04)	1,888	1,641	64
1250	9.5 (8.3)	4.6	2.05 (1.78)	1,106	961	70
1500	10.8 (9.3)	7.8	1.38 (1.20)	744	647	71
1750	11.5 (10.0)	10.6	1.08 (0.94)	586	509	72
2000	13.0 (11.3)	17.6	0.74 (0.64)	399	347	73
2250	15.5 (13.5)	24.0	0.65 (0.56)	349	303	74
2500	17.3 (15.0)	32.0	0.54 (0.47)	291	253	75
2750	20.8 (18.0)	36.8	0.56 (0.49)	304	265	76

Conditions: temperature: 72°; humidity: 90%; wind: 05-18 mph; seas: 2-3'; load: full fuel, 1/2 water, 2 persons, mod. gear. Speeds are two-way averages measured w/Stalker radar gun. GPH measured with Caterpillar fuel flow gear. Range: 90% of advertised fuel capacity. Decibels measured on A-scale: 65 dB is the level of normal conversation.