

PSI/WOODRIDGE CAVALLA 34'

By Larry Hyland

Some stories are easy to write. Others require discipline. This story is in the second category.

This is not so much a boat review as it is a commentary on product development in the boating industry. What I saw exceeds the space I have to relate it.

Van Woodham is the centerpiece. An accomplished businessman, Woodham has integrated the metal-working skills of his forest-products processing business with boating by hooking up with Wooldridge Boats of Seattle, Wash. A known quantity in the Northwest since 1915, Wooldridge boats are rugged and reliable.

The marriage has borne fruit with more than 60 PSI products delivered to sportsmen and government agencies since 2001. Woodham is now designing a "Gulf Hull" for the SKA crowd.

King mackerel competitions are tough on boats. Extended high-speed runs in open seas are the norm. Craft must be rugged with long legs. These criteria are the bedrock of the Cavalla's specifications with "fast," "dry" and "practical" tossed in for good measure.

Woodham mentioned that "Cavalla" comes from the taxonomic name for the king mackerel (*Scomberomorus cavalla*) as well as the Spanish word for horse. Both definitions seem appropriate.

On the other hand, the USS Cavalla, on display in Galveston, Texas, is known as the "Luckiest Ship in Submarine Service."

Commissioned in 1944, the Cavalla completed six combat cruises, sank 90,000 plus tons of Japanese shipping including an aircraft carrier, and was in Tokyo Bay for the surrender. Decommissioned in 1946, she was recommissioned in 1951 as an

experimental antisubmarine boat, the first of its kind.

The USS Cavalla's heritage is more akin to Woodham's efforts than either fish or horses. Woodham's Cavalla 34 is a test-bed for a new generation of hulls.



Van Woodham sits at the helm of the Cavalla 34 workhorse mackerel boat.

Sea conditions in the Gulf make special demands on a hull. Woodham is working with marine architect Steve French of Applied Concepts Unleashed in Stuart, Fla., on his design.

The resultant deep-Vee hull, with 24 degrees of transom deadrise, carries two pair of lifting strakes.

The strakes terminate at midships and the hull picks up a graceful, shallow curve outboard to direct spray down and away from the hull. French's "Wave Form" hull is tailored for high performance in heavy seas with a dry ride.

The theme of test-bedding continues inside the rubrails of the Cavalla 34 with a state-of-the-art electronics suite provided by Raymarine, shock-mitigating seats from Shockwave, a Global Star satellite communications system from Delta Logic, and a forest of pumps from Jabsco to clear bilges and aerate fish wells.

Working with his sponsors, Woodham is field-testing the latest in electronic and mechanical equipment.

SPECIFICATIONS

The Cavalla 34 is impressive, if not imposing, when sitting on a tri-axle Champion trailer. Nominally road legal with an 11-foot beam, the rig's 13-foot aircraft is just shy of the 13-foot, 6-inch limit on the inter-



The side panels flanking the helm station are hinged and rotate outboard to shield the occupants from wind blast and spray as they ride in their shock-wave seats.

state highway system.

With an estimated dry weight of 8,000 pounds, engines, 450 gallons of fuel, 150 gallons of water, a ton of ice and tackle will push the rolling weight close to 15,000 pounds. That is a number to be considered when selecting a tow vehicle. The boat has been fished from Texas to Florida with no adverse effects.

Twin engines are bolted to an integral swim platform with around 15 square feet of uninterrupted deck for working fish aft.

Moving forward via "tuna doors" port and starboard of the bait center — pogie pen — reveals the cockpit with 35 square feet of flat deck.

The pogie pen sports a 55-gallon tank with easy access through a waist-high hatch, four aerated bait tubes and a replaceable cutting board topside.

Cleanliness is a major concern, a task made simpler by dual wash-down stations aft, a third station forward and a "blood rail" — covered trough — running midships to the transom.

Advertised as a "center console," the boat is closer to being a pilot house with sturdy side panels aft, a rigid top, industrial-quality gasketed windows and solid panels framing the helm.

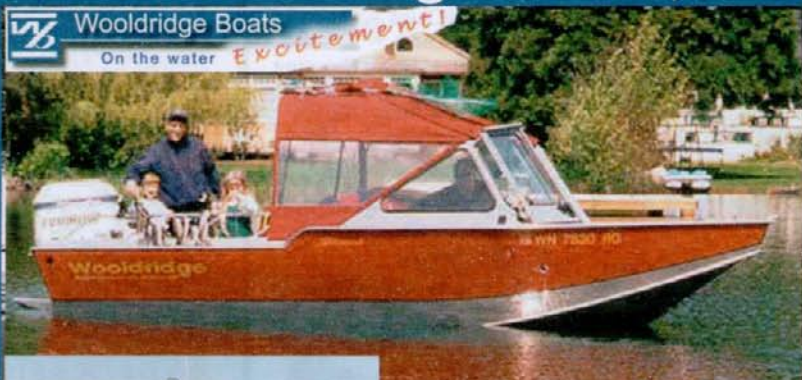


A brilliant innovation, the side panels flanking the helm station are hinged, connected to massive Lenco actuators, and they rotate outboard to shield the occupants from windblast and spray.

Woodham has a concept patent on this arrangement, but expect it to be showing up on other boats. It's one of the brightest ideas in a long time.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 38

PSI/Wooldridge

PSI / Wooldridge Boats, Inc.

Manufacturer Of High Quality
Welded Aluminum
Jet/Prop Boats

P.O. Box 488 • Theodore, AL 36590
251-957-2113 (office) • 251-957-2119 (fax)
www.wooldridgeboats.com

P
Sales, Inc.

PSI/Wooldridge



The helm exemplifies practicality and roominess with tilt wheel, throttle quadrant mounted high on centerline and skads of space for flush-mounting electronics. The forward dry-storage compartment can double as a second fish box, right.

The helm continues the themes of practicality and roominess with tilt wheel, throttle quadrant mounted high on centerline, and skads of space for flush-mounting electronics.

The spacious head compartment is cleanly detailed with soft panels for occupant protection. Lights, towel rack, wash basin and hinged port window add to the experience.

Other observations include a rope locker with electric capstan, rod-storage compartments imbedded in the caprail, and a second fish box/dry-store compartment in a raised deck just forward of the head compartment.

With a gunwale height averaging 35 inches from transom to rope locker, fishermen are offered a secure, dry environment.

Despite its "industrial-strength" construction, fit, finish, paint, welding and the layout of the Cavalla 34 were all outstanding.

Using 3/16-inch plate, massive box stringers and more than 900 pounds of foam for noise abatement and rigidity, the boat will take more punishment than the occupants.

PERFORMANCE

Lightly loaded, the twin 275HP Mercury Verados planed the hull at 16 knots and cruised at 30 knots at 4,800 rpm. Top speed was recorded at 40 knots.

Like most deep-vee hulls, the boat is sensitive to engine tilt and trim tab management for a good ride. Fully fueled, the boat should range better than 500 miles.



The bait center is flanked on either side by tuna doors leading to the swim platform where the engines are mounted.

FUTURE PLANS

Not slated for full production, the Cavalla 34 is a test bed. Few changes are anticipated other than upgrading to 1/4-inch aluminum plate.

Woodham envisions 32-, 35- and 38-foot versions with outboard,



The rear facing seats have coolers mounted underneath them.

inboard and I/O powerplants in gasoline or diesel. Pricing will vary with options and range between \$100,000 and \$250,000.

For more information on the complete PSI/Wooldrige lineup, visit the company's web site at www.psisalesinc.com.