



One boat, two captains

This enthusiastic couple cruises the greatest Great Lake

by Karen Larson

ALL HUSBANDS QUAKE WHEN GREETED by their wives with the words, “Sit down. We need to talk.” Six years ago, those dreaded words led to good news for Dale Longtin, however. His wife, Cori Breidenbach, had received the call from a friend of theirs telling them he was selling his 1976 Ericson 29, *Carina*. Cori began thinking that perhaps it was time to sell their Chrysler 22 and revise their sailing activities. Dale and Cori called in an accountant to determine whether they had what it takes to make a purchase of this nature. They did — and they soon became *Carina’s* third owners.

Now that they have a liveaboard lifestyle in mind, Dale and Cori have begun looking for *Carina’s* fourth owners. The next family or couple to have wonderful sailing adventures on *Carina* won’t be hard to find.

Carina is a much-modified, well-maintained cruiser. Her second owner, Tom Embertson, was primarily the handyman who gave her her present name, modified her for cruising, and passed along the results of his accomplishments when he bought an Islander 36. Dale and Cori have been the happy custodians for 5 years, maintaining her while enjoying Lake Superior aboard.

Dale discovered sailing while spending summers at a family cabin in another beautiful cruising area: Lake of the Woods at the border of Minnesota and Ontario, Canada. His family owned powerboats, but another enterprising fellow brought a sailboat to the area and offered sailboat rides to paying customers. As a teenager, Dale’s appreciation of sailboats

changed the day the boat rounded up while he was at the helm. “I didn’t know what was happening,” he remembers, “but I was impressed by all that power.”

Summer sailing

After that he spent summers aboard a Sunfish knockoff by Arctic Cat, Inc. (of snowmobile fame). Somewhat later came a Force Five, an AMF design similar to a Laser. More than the Arctic Cat, this boat turned Dale into a sailor. “A Force Five teaches you to sail, because if you do anything wrong, you’re in the water,” he says. He swam frequently in the beginning and turned righting the boat into an art form. “I could capsize the boat and get it back

Dale Longtin and Cori Breidenbach, above, rarely miss a summer weekend aboard *Carina*, at right, their highly modified and well-maintained Ericson 29.

“Dale . . . encourages his wife. ‘This boat has two captains,’ he says with pride.”

up without getting wet above the knees,” he says. As it capsized, he simply climbed over the side to the centerboard, tipped it upright, and stepped back in.

About the time he’d worked it all out, Cori came into Dale’s life. “He courted me aboard that Force Five,”



she says. "We even sailed it on our honeymoon." Cori has a twinkle in her eye and an indomitable spirit. After having her hand on the tiller a time or two, she decided she could sail the boat solo. Dale wasn't sure she was ready, but she wouldn't be discouraged. Sure enough, the Force Five had a sailing lesson in store for Cori, too, and she soon learned that she didn't have the upper-body strength to right the boat by herself. That might have been the end of sailing for lesser women. Not for courageous Cori. This first solo was merely the beginning.

Eventually the two were sailing a Chrysler 22 on Lake Pepin, a wide spot in the Mississippi River not too far from the Twin Cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul, where they were living. They enjoyed frequent trips to the boat, and Dale took it to the Apostle Islands, where he soon decided that a larger boat would be better for this more extensive cruising ground. The couple wound up chartering boats, including *Carina*, in the Apostles.

Longer cruises

Once they'd purchased the larger Ericson and began cruising on a corner of Lake Superior, there was no looking back. Each year they made longer and more ambitious cruises on the big lake, one of which included a 44-hour passage to a distant point in Ontario and working their way back via the scenic and protected anchorages along the way. Most summers between launch in mid-May and layup in mid-October, Dale and Cori rarely missed a weekend at the boat. "The best 3 weeks of my life were 2 years ago when we spent 3 weeks cruising in Canada (on Lake Superior's north shore)," Cori says.

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During the time they spent sailing on *Carina*, Cori discovered an untapped facet of her psyche. She wanted to singlehand this boat so she could sail on weekends when Dale's work took him away from home. With the encouragement of Dale and three others, she became an accomplished sailor in her own right and was soon entering a low-key, but long and physically challenging race for singlehanders in the Apostles, a 27-mile solo circumnavigation of Madeline Island. She has competed in this fun contest twice. So far, Cori is the only woman ever to enter this race.

"I never understood what motivated women like Ellen MacArthur to enter a singlehanded long-distance race," Cori says, beaming. "But by the time I finished my first race, I understood. I didn't want to get off the boat. *Carina* and I had bonded. It was very empowering." Dale, who is not driven to race but who also singlehands the boat when Cori is unavailable for a weekend, encourages his wife.

"This boat has two captains," he says with pride. "One day I realized that when I was captain, everything was done beautifully by the 'crew.' But when Cori was captain, I wasn't following through. I wasn't used to doing all those things (like



The Ericson 29 has a usable and roomy interior with a large starboard quarter berth. Unfortunately, the galley lacks an oven and permanent range. The V-berth, bottom photos, is finished with wood battens. Notice the large flat tray with a flip-down door above the V-berth. It's a perfect place for storing charts.





getting out docklines and fenders). When I was captain, they just happened magically. I decided that when Cori was captain she had 'sh*# for crew,' so I had a hat embroidered with those words and wore it the next time I messed up. Now we both wear it at times."

Wonderful shape

Since Dale and Cori would rather spend time sailing than doing projects on their boat, they're lucky that *Carina* was in wonderful shape when they bought her. They have recovered the cushions and increased the insulation in the icebox. They bought a new mainsail and had the furling jib redone by North to add a couple of ropes in the luff. These ropes take up the slack better than foam, they point out, since foam is eventually crushed by spending most of its time in the furled position. Dale also enlarged the battery storage space in order to accommodate two 27s where a pair of 24s had been.

But previous owner Tom Embertson deserves the praise for installing the removable inner forestay, which allows them to hank on a storm jib. This forestay runs through the anchor rope locker and is tied to the hull. He added controls so all lines lead to the cockpit, installed a deck washdown system, and moved the shorepower outlet. Belowdecks, he added a nifty folding door to expand the room in the head to accommodate the knees of a sitting sailor, added storage above the settees, mounted the radar screen so it could be seen from the cockpit, added extra seating for the fold-down dining table, and built in a clever screen and chart storage shelf above the V-berth, among other things. Tom



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also rewired and replumbed the boat and added alarms to indicate low oil pressure, high water, low gas, and low battery.

All of these modifications make a 29-footer more livable, of course. And *Carina* was more than adequate during the summer of the 3-week cruise with all provisions aboard. But now Dale and Cori are contemplating a liveaboard life on the East Coast. For this lifestyle, *Carina* has a few disadvantages. Primary among them is the lack of an oven and the need for a permanently mounted range. Dale and Cori cook on a Coleman camp stove, which is inconvenient on long crossings, since it's not gimballed or fastened as securely as necessary on lumpy seas.

Looking to live aboard

So they're looking for a 35- to 40-foot boat, believing that size to be as large as either one of them can single-hand. They may go offshore someday but are looking for a roomy coastal cruiser with storage capable of being a liveaboard. "I looked at boats in Annapolis," Dale says. "That changed our



An inner forestay (added by the previous owner for use in rough weather) is stowed along the mast and fastened to the deck when needed. An added partition in the chain locker allows the load of the inner forestay to pass through the locker to the hull.

outlook about what we needed. I began looking for something like a Tayana with a full keel. But now we're looking for a boat capable of bluewater cruising but lighter than the Tayana-type boat. Something with a modified fin keel. We want to be able to go out in lighter wind."

Sometimes cruising dreams are shifted from dream status to reality by a job change. Not long ago Dale lost his job as the lead of a team of field computer installation specialists. In the ultimate irony, they trained their replacements in the field and were then laid off. That led the couple to a crossroads. For the past five years they had been talking about living aboard and cruising. They were discussing how they'd sell the house, quit their jobs, and make the timing play out. They had a mindset of not accumulating more stuff and of divesting what was not needed. All they needed was the right timing.

The timing is now, since Dale is free to move. Cori has arranged for a job transfer from Minneapolis to Virginia Beach with her employer, Galyan's, a respected outdoor outfitter, where she is office manager. All the dominoes are stacked on the table. This couple will soon learn the pleasures of saltwater cruising in a much warmer sailing climate. *Carina* will go on to show another family what can be achieved in a well-executed 29-foot design. 

Ericson 29

A comparison with three of its rivals

by Ted Brewer

AVID NUMBER CRUNCHERS WILL SEE I've added a new item to the table below: the dates the boats were built. I feel this is significant for two reasons. First it's hardly fair to compare an older boat to a contemporary design. Surely we designers have learned something about performance, comfort, and so on over the intervening years. Besides, fashions change and what was considered generous beam in the 1960s and '70s is very much on the narrow side today. Also I think it reassuring to know that a particular design had a decent run of life. That indicates that the boat was well received by the buyers for a reasonable length of time and was not quickly dated — as many new boats are — or rejected because of inherent problems of design or construction.

I was pleased to find three boats to compare with the Ericson 29 that were all of the same era, had a good production run, and were alike in many respects, such as beam, displacement, and sail area. This makes it a very interesting group to consider and shows how changes in only one or two dimensions can markedly affect the resulting comparison figures and performance.


For example, the Ericson 29 is 180 pounds heavier than the Pearson 30 but is 3 feet shorter on the waterline. As a result, its Displ./LWL ratio is a very hefty 356.4 compared to the 30's rather svelte 237.7. Spreading the displacement over a longer waterline definitely reduces wave making and, ultimately, increases performance.

From a performance viewpoint, I

feel the Ericson has to be the slowest of this group by a small margin as it is carrying the heaviest displacement on the shortest waterline, has the shoalest draft, and spreads the least amount of sail. Its short waterline might give it an edge in light air, due to having a lower wetted surface, but all in all its figures do not add up to sparkling times around the buoys in average conditions. On the good side, the Ericson's husky displacement and short waterline should add up to the best motion comfort in a seaway and also give it a slight edge in the capsize number should the owner undertake a long ocean passage.

Both the Ericson and the Pearson have their rudders swept sharply aft, a style that was popular in that era. It looks "fast," but the boats would probably steer better if the rudder stocks were more vertical. That would increase rudder efficiency and ease the problem of an extremely strong helm when backing out of a slip under power.

Given the numbers — and that is all we have to go on — I would say any of these little yachts would make a fine coastal cruiser for a couple or small family. And with a decent Performance Handicap Racing Fleet (PHRF) rating, you could have a lot of fun in club racing as well. There are no extremes of beam. All the yachts have a reassuring ballast ratio and capsize figure. So with intelligent preparation, they could well make a reasonable bluewater passage.

Stainless steel was inexpensive and popular in the 1970s, however, so be sure to have a very thorough marine survey, particularly of the likely failure spots such as the rig, chainplates, keel bolts, rudder stock, and other stainless-steel fittings subject to sea water, before you bid adieu to your friends. Better safe than sorry. Fair winds! 

	Ericson 29	Cal 29	Pearson 30	Sabre 28
Years built	1970-79	1970-78	1971-80	1970-86
LOA	27' 7"	29' 0"	29' 9"	28' 5"
LWL	22' 0"	24' 0"	25' 0"	22' 10"
Beam	9' 3"	9' 3"	9' 6"	9' 2"
Draft	4' 4"	4' 6"	5' 0"	4' 8"
Displacement	8,500 lb.	8,000 lb.	8,320 lb.	7,800 lb.
Ballast	3,900 lb.	3,350 lb.	3,560 lb.	3,100 lb.
LOA/LWL ratio	1.30	1.21	1.19	1.24
Beam/LWL ratio	0.42	0.39	0.38	0.40
Displ./LWL ratio	356.4	258.3	237.7	292.6
Bal./Displ. ratio	45.9%	41.9%	42.8%	39.7%
Sail area	404 sq. ft.	434 sq. ft.	444 sq. ft.	403 sq. ft.
SA/Displ. ratio	15.52	17.36	17.3	16.39
Capsize number	1.81	1.85	1.88	1.85
Comfort ratio	28.1	24.9	24.1	25.5



Ericson 29



Cal 29



Pearson 30



Sabre 28