



PERFECT IS GOOD ENOUGH

# MARLOW'S EXPLORER 86

About 10 years ago David Marlow came out of retirement to build one more boat, for himself. Little did he know then that he would deliver the 100th Marlow yacht this year. The Marlow 86E is the company's new flagship, an explorer yacht with a 31-knot top speed, built in composite to class for a well-known Miami boating family. We seized a chance to get onboard and found that Marlow has not given up on his quest for perfection.

Story Cecile Gauert Photos Matthieu Carlin



All woodwork on the Marlow comes from one teak tree





**An open floor plan puts the salon, left, and the dining area, above, on the same level; a few steps lead to the galley, opposite page**

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## HE 2008 MIAMI BOAT SHOW

witnessed the premiere of Marlow's 86' Explorer, a new chapter in a story that began 10 years ago when David Marlow started working on the design of what he planned to be his personal yacht. He tinkered with scale models that he built in his house in Maine until he was reasonably happy with the results and then mailed blueprints to friends and acquaintances, seeking their opinion. The response was positive; Marlow received seven deposit checks in lieu of feedback, and sold seven more boats after showing the first Taiwan-built Marlow 65E, a composite yacht with a 25-knot top speed, at the 2001 Miami Boat Show.

David Marlow acquired a property in a remote area of China, brought from Taiwan 20 master boat builders who recruited and trained local workers, and built a 300,000-square-foot environmentally-friendly manufacturing plant that will soon become "carbon neutral." In 2002 the first Marlow 78 Explorer emerged from Marlow-Norsemen's waterfront factory. Marlow currently is working on hull 36 in that series, and about 15 yachts are in various stages of production at any one time, while smaller hulls continue to be built in Taiwan. While increased production schedules can pressure any manufacturer into occasional lapses in quality, evidently that is not the case here. Judging at least from this particular sample of their work, workers at Marlow-Norsemen seem to subscribe to the company credo, "perfect is good enough."

The Marlow 86E's impeccable teak work and quality high-gloss finishes are immediately evident upon entering the main deck salon. The layout is at once inviting and comfortable, classic and elegant. An open main deck features a spacious lounge and dining area, and a galley opens onto the pilothouse. A few steps lead down from the pilothouse to an accommodation deck that includes a full-beam master stateroom, a forward VIP and two additional guest rooms. Beautifully-finished oversized crew accommodations, including a captain's cabin with a queen-size bed, share a private entrance amidships. Up top, a flybridge offers ample room for water toys, and the expansive aft deck overlooks a great swim platform. A shiny blue



Comfortable and classic, the master stateroom and the VIP, right, include ample storage



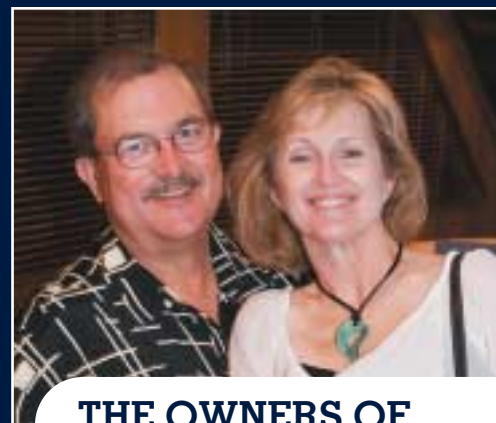
hull and gleaming white superstructure (gel coated and painted at the owner's request) give the yacht classic allure. The Marlow 86E is inviting to be sure, but that's only the beginning of the story.

The proof is in the details. These might escape a casual visitor, but David Marlow makes sure the remarkable work of Marlow-Norsemen craftsmen doesn't go unnoticed. The main salon's gold-plated light fixtures, for example, are adorned with engraved silver medallions emblazoned with the yacht's name and likeness. Valances, decorated with a thin bead of ebony, enclose speakers by Bose. The dining area features a high-quality Sub-Zero refrigerator, which has been upgraded with a wood-encased glass door and shelves that match the surrounding cabinets. All woodwork comes from one 42' teak tree, so the spectacular main-deck sole comprises continuous planks. A few of the cabinets are carved into elegant half moons rather than bent into shape. Drawers open effortlessly thanks to ball-bearing stainless-steel slides.

Lift any cushion, and you will find lined formica, resistant to humidity and mold, where you might ordinarily find painted plywood. Bilges are finely finished and gel coated. The open galley, with a 4mm-thick granite-over-honeycomb countertop, features two Grohe faucets—one dedicated to the drinking water that comes from a polished tank to ensure purity. In order to minimize noise from vibration, the shipyard machined and installed tiny screws fitted with rubber O-rings to support shelves inside the cabinets, rather than use ordinary pegs. And, because no one likes soggy crackers, a heated compartment helps keep snacks crisp and dry. Shoji screens in the spacious master stateroom feature rice paper made at the Marlow-Norsemen factory. Solid stainless-steel exterior handrails feature an oval shape that fits the hand perfectly. An Eskimo ice machine located inside steps leading to the aft platform continuously produces shaved ice to cool off fishermen and their catch.

Other important details relate to the yacht's operation and overall performance. The Marlow 86E is no mere museum piece; it is meant to go places. An experienced yachtsman who has circumnavigated the Earth so many times that he "got dizzy," David Marlow both understands and responds to the needs of those who operate his yachts, be they owners or crew.

"Either you do it well, or you don't," says Marlow as he walks an increasingly mesmerized trio of visitors through the yacht's less obvious features. Color-coded wiring is neatly bundled inside conduits throughout the yacht. The pilothouse's electric panel pulls out completely to reveal a see-through case, allowing an instant view of back-panel connections. A lined tunnel, large enough for a man to crawl through, provides access to the dashboard's electronics displays, so there is no need to pull them out for maintenance. A hatch, perfectly finished to match the main salon's teak sole and



## THE OWNERS OF THE NEW MARLOW 86...

...are boating enthusiasts who love to share their time on the water with their large family and long-time captain. In 2004 the Miami residents purchased the historic Merrill Stevens yard, which developers eyed as an attractive real estate investment, and not only committed to preserve it as one of the U.S.' longest-continuing working yards but also to expand it. When we met Hugh Westbrook days before the Miami Boat Show he yet had to see his new yacht *Anne Mary*, which had just arrived from China. But as an experience boater, the previous owner of a Marlow 78 and the owner of a shipyard, he was confident.

"We loved the 78; it was the perfect boat," said Westbrook when we met him at his downtown Miami office overlooking Biscayne Bay, one of his favorite cruising grounds. The family, he added, spent a lot of time onboard, fishing and swimming from the boat's nice swim platform. With its modest draft the Marlow 78 was perfect for the Bahamas' shallow waters, where the Westbrooks go as often as time allows, and its stable ride was a hit with anyone subject to sea sickness.

Family time matters a great deal to Carole and Hugh Westbrook. Although they sold the Marlow 78 in anticipation of their new one, they kept the 55' sport fisher they purchased in 1984 because it holds so many great family memories. The layout of their next, larger, yacht had to accommodate their grown children and growing grandchildren.

But they also aspired, after Hugh's many years working 18-hour days as co-founder and long-time CEO of VITAS, a company that established hospice programs throughout the U.S., to take a few longer trips. They had sailed in Maine and wanted to return to the area, but this time in something that had a bit more power. They also wanted to cruise the Great Lakes and circle back down the Mississippi, dropping in on family along the way.

Such plans required greater range, a hull able to handle all kinds of cruising conditions and a larger crew. About 18 years ago the Westbrooks had met Captain Gordon Albury, who followed the build of the new Marlow. Albury came recommended as a relief captain on a charter trip that nearly ended before it started when the charter boat they had booked arrived damaged, and with an intoxicat-



The flybridge has room for a small sailboat, and the aft platform is perfect for fishing and swimming



insulated with rubber so it does not damage the floor, provides a wide access to the gel-coated fuel tank, which is located exactly in the center of the boat. Refueling is made easier with two fuel intakes located roughly at hip level on both side decks. The Marlow 86E features twin Caterpillar C32s bedded on steel mounts. This relatively modest power alone does not explain the yacht's performance, which we are about to experience.

Standing at the flybridge station, Marlow fires the engines and easily pulls away from the dock. In addition to six passengers, the yacht is carrying 500 gallons of water and about 3000 gallons of fuel. As the weather is a bit windy and unsettled, everyone retreats from the flybridge to the pilothouse to continue conversing in air-conditioned comfort. It is not hard to do, as the pilothouse is remarkably quiet. As soon as the yacht leaves a no-wake zone, Marlow picks up the pace. Within seconds of a gradual and almost imperceptible speed increase, the yacht's GPS registers 31.1 knots. A few seconds of silence and quizzical looks invite Marlow to declare, "I think we got the bottom right."

Later, he provides a far more detailed and technical explanation that involves a mix of factors, including low displacement, construction techniques, trim and propulsion angles. As Marlow puts it, it is like an orchestra ensemble where each instrument adds to the symphony. From the beginning Marlow has made use of strut foils that enclose almost the entire exterior length of the yacht's prop shafts, acting a bit as feathers on an arrow. "In rugged sea conditions they add great directional stability to the yacht, reducing the large variations on course seen in common yachts, especially downwind," Marlow says.

Another major consideration is weight. "You don't want to fight the wave, you want to dance with it," Marlow says. Marlow yachts are built in composite using proprietary Full Stack Vacuum Infusion. The Marlow 86E is the first hull to have been treated with Marlow's Resin Infused Vacuum Assisted Transfer (RIVAT), a method that helps deliver just the right amount of resin (epoxy is this case) to the mold, resulting in important weight-saving benefits. Employing techniques not unlike those used in aircraft construction, the builder has eliminated the need for thick frames to support deck soles. Whatever heavy equipment has to be onboard, it has been placed so as not to affect the yacht's ability to maintain perfect trim, without adding ballast. Precise placement of the single 3,900-gallon fuel tank amidships (on the Longitudinal Center of Buoyancy) limits trim change whether the tank is full or empty. The yacht's low center of gravity eliminates the need for stabilizer fins that have the downside of adding drag, which both lowers speed and increases fuel consumption. Extensive research also went into developing effective thrust angles, as well as bottom contours that favor smooth water flow.

Last but not least, according to Marlow, this is the first Full Stack Infusion motoryacht to be built to full Bureau Veritas (BV) certification. The yard's use of epoxy resins and engineered fabrics such as Kevlar has created a structure that "exceeds all predictions for laminate strength yields," Marlow says. "Unsupported panel sections on the hull were reduced to less than one half the typical criteria for yachts of this type providing huge margins of safety engineering, far in excess of normal yacht standards. During the course of construction, the yacht became referred to as the 'Ice Class' FRP yacht."

David Marlow has provided much food for thought, and the tour of the new Marlow 86E has been a real eye opener. But one image stands out with particular clarity, and that is the yacht gleaming in the dwindling light of a Key West sunset. The pilot, looking for just the right angle for a photo, guides the hull through a series of arabesques. The yacht appears to be dancing. —

**"You don't want to fight the wave, you want to dance with it"**

ed captain to boot. The family was left standing on the dock with gear and luggage. Capt. Albury saved the day, and his boat became a favorite choice for family charter outings. Eventually he served as captain of the Westbrooks' 55' sport fisher, and later of the Marlow 78. When discussions started about a new, larger boat, Albury expressed the desire for a more spacious cabin, and the Westbrooks opined that a hostess and a chef might be a nice addition for extended trips.

There was little argument that the new yacht would be a Marlow, whose typically classic décor and feel fit the Westbrooks' taste and lifestyle. In addition, they enjoyed a good established relationship with Marlow Yachts. "Part of what sold me on Marlow was that when we bought the 78, David Marlow got in touch with us to say they had done a number of upgrades on this model and offered to do them on our boat at no charge," Westbrook said. "He takes great pride in what it does."

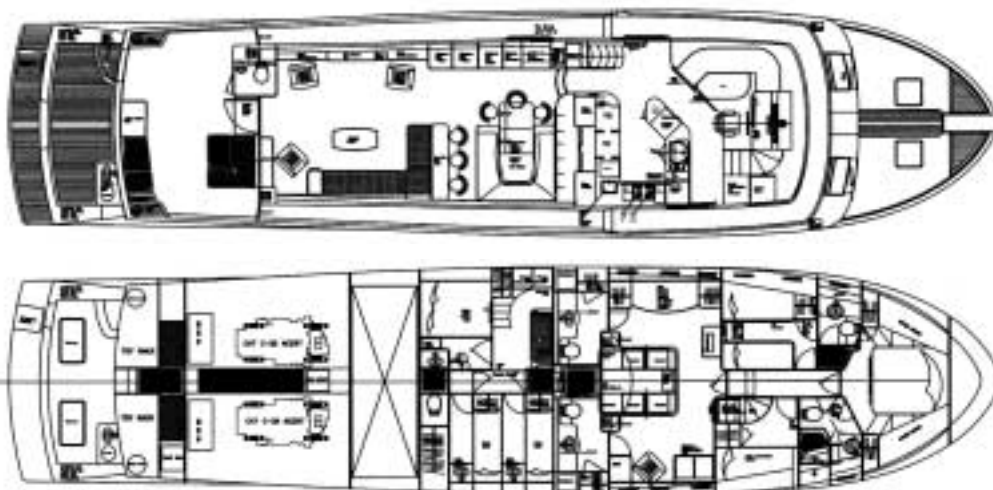
Capt. Albury reported back from Marlow-Norsemen's facility with some 1500 photographs that filled Hugh Westbrook's e-mail inbox and allowed the couple to make a few changes along the way. Ultimately, the Marlow 86 exactly reflected everyone's goals. The accommodation deck has four private cabins. The VIP in the bow has two bunks above the queen-size bed, and two bunk beds forward of the master allow taking along yet more kids. The crew quarters, located amidships are impressive, especially on a yacht this size. Finished with the same quality materials found throughout the yacht, the three cabins each have a sink, and the captain's cabin has a queen-size bed. Although the cockpit has been extended, the "wonderful swim platform" is still there for long days of fishing and swimming. The expanded upper deck includes room for a small sailboat or a day boat, and provides additional shade for the aft deck just below. Hugh and Carole Westbrook are still very active in business and philanthropy, and the additional space on the new Marlow allows them a small desk, while internet access will enable them to keep in touch, even as the yacht's 1200-nm range will give them the freedom to stay away for longer periods of time.

This is the first boat the Westbrooks have built (although it had not been used, the Marlow 78 had a previous owner,) and Hugh says they enjoyed the experience. They had many conversations with the yard, they say, and everyone at Marlow proved to be very receptive. "As an experienced captain (Albury) had a lot of suggestions to make on things like fuel transfer and electronics, which the Marlow group found helpful and treated as if our opinion mattered," Westbrook said.

"I felt a lot of confidence building a new boat, which will make it hard not to want to build another someday," Westbrook said. "Someone told me the perfect boat is always the next boat. —



The setup of the helm stations is all about access and performance



- LOA:** 90'7"
- Beam:** 20'4"
- Draft:** 4'11"
- Displacement:** approx. 125,000 Lbs.
- Fuel capacity:** 3,900 Gal.
- Fresh water capacity:** 550 Gal., including 100-Gal. drinking tank
- Engines:** 2 x Caterpillar C32
- Generators:** 2 x 33 kW Northern Lights
- Guests:** 4 cabins
- Crew:** 3 cabins
- Propulsion:** ZF New Foil Section 42" 5-blade propellers; 4" Aquamet 22HS shafting
- Range @18 knots:** 1,200 miles
- Maximum speed:** 30 knots
- Cruising speed:** 25 knots
- Bow thrusters:** Naiad Hydraulics
- Stabilizers:** Naiad Hydraulics
- Water makers:** Sea Recovery
- Sewage system:** Sea Land Magnum
- Venus toilets:** FRP Holding Tanks
- Fire control system:** Sea Fire Environmental
- Monitoring systems:** Custom designed and shipyard built
- Air conditioning:** Marineaire Dometic Chilled Water
- Navigation equipment:** Furuno Navtec
- Tenders:** Marlow Sprite and Novurania
- Exterior finish:** Flag Blue Awlgrip Hull, Oyster White Awlgrip Superstructure
- Construction:** Full Stack Infused Kevlar, S Glass, E Glass, Corecel Foam, utilizing Modified Epoxy Resins
- Classification:** Bureau Veritas
- Yacht Design:** Marlow Design Group
- Interior Design:** Marlow Design Group
- Shipyard:** Marlow-Norsemen, China

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