

Aspen Newsletter - Winter Boat Show's February 24, 2009

Good Day,

As usual there has been a great deal of activity the last few months starting with preparations for the Seattle and Miami Boat Shows. The tooling for the new models, L80 Launch and C80 Cruiser, was completed in November and December. The first parts were ready for the Seattle Boat Show which ran January 22 thru February 1, 2009. A full size mockup of the C80 Cruiser was also built for the display at the Seattle show which received a great response.

Seattle Show



C80 Cruiser Interior - 26' with King Size Bed Forward

The C80 Cruiser mock-up was a standout in the show. Although, some people couldn't quite grasp what they were looking at; those who were a little more savvy, were very delighted with the presentation. It gave people an opportunity to see, feel, and touch the true spaces of the future 26' cruising boat.

The Seattle Show was well attended this year, much better than many had expected. The kickoff was a VIP night on Thursday, prior to the main opening of the show. It was a huge success; the aisles were full of passionate boaters and boat lovers. My builder and dealers friends were all feeling better about the upcoming

year after the show. Halfway through the show, many had matched last year's sales.

Next up, it was a whirlwind rush to finish the L80 Launches' electrical and engine systems after moving out of the Seattle Boat Show on February 3rd and to get to Miami for the pre-show press events which started on February 10th. Truckers wanted 10 days to make the trip in winter weather, that was not an option. After moving out Monday night, we finished the L80's electrical and engine systems by Friday afternoon. We then hit the road for Miami, 3500 miles away, with our motor home towing the 10' wide Aspen 26'. In total, 65' of fun winter driving. With only a few opportunities along the way, a slightly bent axle and its' associated tire problems, we made it to Miami on the following Tuesday (4 1/2 days). Miami was a delight; warm, clear, 75 degrees, a little breeze, a lot of SUN. Very different than winter in Seattle.

Larry and Nick near Laramie, Wyoming; a balmy 8 degrees.



Towing was actually pretty easy. The L80's shape and weight pulled effortlessly. We had bought wide load permits for the western states for over width, but with time tight, we ran through all the other states down and back smoothly. I will say that the 30-60 mph gusty winter crosswinds did give our breadbox square motor home fits. We had one day with an average speed of 45 mph in Iowa and Missouri (very frustrating for two guys on a timeline).

Miami 09

We Splash in Miami



We had two locations at the In the Water Miami Show, a wet slip for the boat and a covered booth on the main entrance to showcase the 26', 39', and 48' models. We did 14 magazine reviews, including all the major US trade press and the key European magazines. We entered the Innovation of the Year Award program for boats 26' and over. We won the award on Friday, February 13th. This is a 36 billion dollar a year industry and a very coveted award. The 7 writer judging panel was very impressed with a boat that exhibited the Aspen's fuel savings with no compromise to space or capability. The judges also viewed the Aspen as a completely new concept in hull design. Forty-three other companies competed for this award. The response to Aspen was very positive. Most writers were bubbling with excitement after they saw for themselves how the boat performed, tracked - hands off, and glided through the water with almost no wake. Our award winning design not only caught the judges' eyes, but also attracted many other writers within the show. "This really, really works! It's unbelievable how cannily it handles and rides," exclaimed Peter Jensen, the editor of Motor Boating. Just for fun, we rigged a 1 1/2 gallon clear fuel beaker to the engine and ran all our demonstrations on this little fuel tank. Typically a 30-45 minute ride. It was very impressive to see how little fuel we burned.

Accepting Innovation of the Year Award



What's Next

We have a lot of interest and exposure and closed three deals from the shows. Also, we will be continuing our demonstration rides to additional buyers over the next few weeks, starting March 2nd. People from the Seattle boat show did not have the opportunity to ride in the boat. In making a purchase this size, a test ride is a must. Nick and I will be contacting you to schedule a ride. If we haven't contacted you yet, please feel free to call **Nick at 206.948.5090**. We hope to complete these rides in the next few weeks, so we can move forward with the production on the 26' lines.

Our engineering and prototype/tooling building (4,000 sq ft), in Snohomish, has just been completed and will be fully operational soon. Nordic Tug (Burlington) has committed to support our boat production over the next few years.

New Engineering and Prototype Facility



US Built

In talking with many of you at the shows, I noted we were looking to build the entire product line in the States. My question was, "Would you be OK with paying 10-20% more for a US product and US quality?" I'd asked this before, but I must say our general response was VERY positive to a US built product this year. The strength of this response comes from several areas. First is quality, you all felt a US built boat is much more consistent in quality and future resale value than overseas boats. You, also, all mentioned in one way or another, that you felt better about keeping jobs and dollars here in these economic times. I'm sure the 20 to 25 families that will be supporting Aspen's production are grateful for this sentiment and work. In the future, there may be products (most often larger) that we may have to consider overseas production. But the immediate future building in the US is our goal.

Hope all the info is helpful and interesting.

All The Best Larry G.