

Albemarle 320 Express Fisherman: A Pedigreed Performer

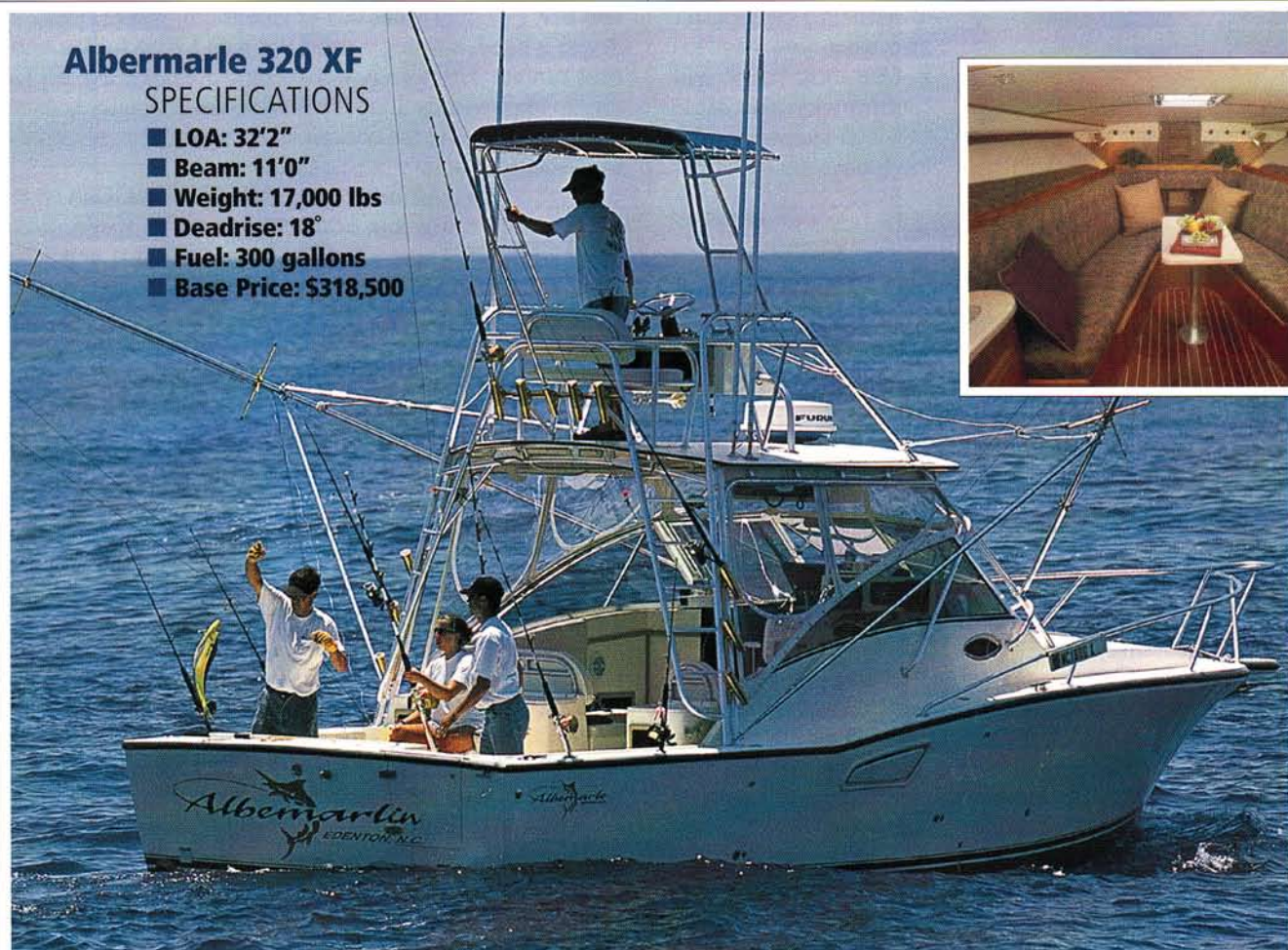
When it comes to sportfishers, Peter Marshall knows his way around the docks. Back when gas was 12 cents a gallon (that would be the early 1950s), Peter skippered a six-pack boat off Miami. As an enterprising young lad in his 20s, Peter took guests staying at the posh resorts along the strip on swordfish excursions and would then sell the steaks to the hotels. "The guests had no place to store the fish steaks.

about Albemarle but just don't see many of them out here. Peter Marshall wants to change all of that, and if the 320 Express Fisherman that we tested is any indication of the rest of the Albemarle fleet, we predict his efforts will be successful.

Albemarle 320 XF

SPECIFICATIONS

- LOA: 32'2"
- Beam: 11'0"
- Weight: 17,000 lbs
- Deadrise: 18°
- Fuel: 300 gallons
- Base Price: \$318,500



PHOTOS COURTESY ALBEMARLE

They were staying in hotel rooms," recalls Peter. "It was a great business. I got paid on both ends."

Fishing worked its way into his blood, and he parleyed that experience into becoming the Hatteras dealer in Annapolis for a number of years before he and his wife made the move to Southern California. So when Peter went looking for a fishing boat line to sell on the Pacific Coast, this lifelong angler knew he wanted a pedigreed boat. That search led him to Albemarle Boats, who just last year celebrated 25 years in the business and over 1,800 hulls.

Albemarle is one of those east coast boat companies whose solid reputation precedes them on the Pacific Coast. Like Rybovich or Merrit, we've all heard good things

The 320 is all about fishing. You can tell when a boat has been designed and engineered by anglers for anglers. It shows in dozens of small details that only a dedicated angler can recognize and appreciate. You could show these features to a casual boater, and they would just nod their heads and say "Hmm, that's nice." But show the same features to someone who has spent countless thousands of hours in pursuit of gamefish and they will say "Wow, now that's nice."

Your first glance at the 320 tells you immediately that this boat is all business. The lines are beautiful and traditional to be sure, but your senses tell you there is something much more here. I was immediately drawn to the beefy factory tower, constructed with two-inch alu-

minum pipe. You might expect such a diameter on a 60-foot sportfisher with a 20-foot tower, but on a 32-foot express, it's a sure sign of an impressively overbuilt boat, which is exactly what you want when fighting 15-foot seas on your way home from the Cortez Bank.

The 320 we tested also comes with two solid fiberglass tops — one over the lower helm and the second over the tower. Another nice feature about the tower is that it has a comfortable bench seat for two full-sized men, and a decking (the top over the lower helm) that doesn't give when you stand on it. One look below will confirm why: that same two-inch aluminum piping frames the undercar-



helm deck. There are not a lot of 32-foot expresses that can offer this arrangement. It's conducive for a group of guys shooting the breeze between jig strikes or the family spending quality time at the island for the weekend.

As with most high-end expresses these days, the entire lower helm deck is raised by a hydraulic lift at the push of a button, providing full access to the engine room. And for checking fluids, there's a smaller hatch in the center that lifts and provides quick access.

The engine room is just what you would hope it would be — clean, simple and well, simple. You don't want a complicated engine room, especially on a 32 express. It should be easy to service and should hold up well over the years, and that's exactly what this engine room exudes. Plus, it's dry as a bone, offering a solid and safe haven for the beautiful Yanmar 370-horsepower diesels. If I could ask the factory to improve one thing it would be the generator housing, which is located in the cockpit lazarette and thus susceptible to incidental water.

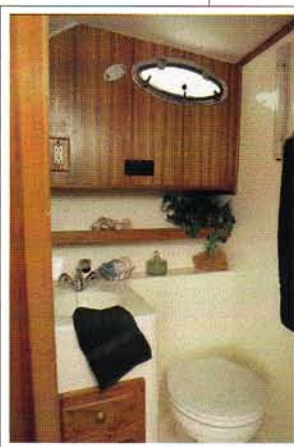
And let me tell you, those Yanmars wind up fast and move this boat with plenty of speed. It can do 28 knots all day (that's 32 mph!) and when pushed, will top you out at 34 knots. With a generous 300-gallon tank, you've got plenty of options if you're planning a two or three day trip. I could not detect even a faint vibration or shudder at top speeds. The 320 is solid as a rock with the acceleration of a go-fast. It's particularly fun to carve turns at high speeds. There is no squirreli-ness at all — the hull cuts through the swell and delivers a soft, dry landing.

The cockpit is an angler's delight and offers a diamond non-skid surface, a built-in transom fish box that is easily converted to a three scoop bait tank, and a large insulated flush deck fish box. Moving forward and separating the helm deck is a built-in bait-prep station with a freshwater sink and tackle storage with shelves built to perfectly accommodate seven Plano plastic tackle trays. The 320 also offers cockpit bolsters, a transom door with proper fittings, and four recessed rod holders.

Below deck, the sleeping quarters offer a V-berth with fold-up back rests that convert into hanging berths, as well as a built-in TV and stereo. This way a family of four or four guys can each have their own bunk. And the fabric selection is a nice touch, offering an attractive, understated pattern of various gamefish.

The galley is small but adequate, with a refrigerator, microwave, sink and Corian countertops. Opposite the galley is the head, which is roomy for a boat this size and finished nicely. There is also a table to gather around for eating or after-dinner cards, which folds away for the night. The flooring is solid teak and holly (no veneer here) and adds an overall richness to the interior.

I think we'll be seeing a lot more Albemarles along the Pacific Coast in the very near future. This is one hot fishing boat... with a pedigree to boot. For more information contact Horizon Yacht and Ship at 800-880-9078 or visit www.HorizonYachts.net ■



riage. Not that you would, but you get the feeling that this tower could support a school bus.

The Pacific Coast dealer for Albemarle, New Horizon Yacht and Ship, has the boat fully equipped with the latest and greatest NavNet electronics from Furuno, including a perfectly positioned screen on the tower top that lets you keep your eyes on the horizon while snatching quick glances at the integrated fishfinder/chartplotter/radar. That's smart marketing, because when you buy this sportfisher, you can fish it that same afternoon. No waiting around for a month or two to get into the installation rotation of your local electronics dealer. It's already done with the best and by the best, right down to the Simrad AP20 Autopilot.

The lower helm is going to offer you the protection you would expect when conditions get nasty. From the top of the windshield and down the sides, it's fully sealed with removable canvas that can be opened to let more breeze in on a hot summer day. The main, larger NavNet screen at this helm station is flush-mounted in a nice, high-gloss, weather-resistant wood console dash for a yacht appearance. The helm seat is also at the right height (hey, don't take this for granted; we've seen them installed in the strangest positions).

Across from the helm seat is a comfortable indoor/outdoor settee with storage below. Aft of it is another settee offering L-shaped conversation seating for seven on the