



FLEMING: An Asian Pacific

Tony Fleming has made a career of building boats in the Far East—starting at American Marine in Hong Kong in 1962 and launching the first of his Taiwanese-built Fleming yachts in 1986.

by Steve D'Antonio

I first met Tony Fleming at a boat show in Maryland in 2008 shortly after he'd concluded the shakedown cruise aboard his own boat, *Venture*, hull #1 of Fleming Yachts' then-new 65 (19.8m) line. It was a shakedown cruise like none I'd heard of before. The two-year, 20,000-nm voyage had taken Fleming from Vancouver, British Columbia, down the California Coast to the Galápagos, through the Panama Canal, up the East Coast to the Hudson River, through the New York State Canals to the St. Lawrence Seaway, from there to Nova Scotia, and finally to Maryland.

While I've known of Fleming Yachts for most of my marine industry career (the first Fleming was launched in 1986), I'd never witnessed Tony Fleming in action before. He and his boat got my attention. His cruising itinerary made it clear that here was a successful career boatbuilder who still loved boating, had a passion for practical technical details, and insisted on

subjecting his company's products to his demanding personal field tests.

In 2010 Fleming invited me to conduct an extended sea trial—Scotland to Iceland—aboard his own Fleming 65, *Venture II*, in preparation for writing a review of the vessel. In 2013 I had the opportunity to learn more about the boats and their builder during a cruise in Alaska's Prince William Sound, aboard the first *Venture*. On both trips we used the boats hard in real-world cruising situations and did maintenance and repairs when and where we had to—not your typical fair-weather run to wow a boat reviewer. I was so impressed with the boats that *Professional BoatBuilder's* readers may be familiar with details and images of their construction and systems from many of my technical articles in these pages—stories on large battery banks and fuel systems, for example. I also got to know Fleming as I shared night watches with him and peppered him with

technical questions, learning from his lifetime of experience in the industry.

Our conversation would start with something like this: "Tony, what is your take on the value of a full keel and the security it provides your boats versus the added wetted surface and consequent drag?" Then, "On the last watch when we left off, you were preparing to leave for your Trans-Africa truck trek, from London to Bulawayo and back. You were describing the modifications you were making to the vehicle, a Bedford truck and former Royal Air Force runway control vehicle." I found that the more I knew about Tony Fleming the better I would understand Fleming Yachts.

Before the Yachts

Like so many boatbuilding careers, Tony Fleming's began accidentally. He didn't start with boats. Born in Suffolk, United Kingdom, he attended what he described as a physically and academically challenging boarding

Venture



Tony Fleming's own Venture II, a European-specification Fleming 65 (19.8m) in Vestmannaeyjar Harbor, Iceland. Like other Fleming models, the 65 is built in Taiwan and capable of cruising any of the world's oceans.

he was just 22 he hitchhiked from Salisbury, Rhodesia, to Dar es Salam, Tanzania, then boarded a ship for Bombay, India, on his way to Singapore, to see a girl (naturally); he ended up getting off in Mombasa, Kenya, and stayed for a year working as a police reservist.

In November 1960, with no sales experience, he took a sales representative position for the British company William Jacks Ltd, in its Hong Kong office. The company handled a staggering range of products, from sterilization equipment to quarry and mining gear. He had to learn a lot and quickly.

During that time the storied Royal Hong Kong Yacht Club provided a focal point for Fleming's social life, and ultimately led to his boatbuilding career. It started with a sales call to soft-drink-bottler Bireley's California Orange, and manager John Newton, whose family owned the then-obscure yard called American Marine, in Junk Bay, in Hong Kong's New Territories. In a roundabout way, Fleming was offered a job with American Marine in engineering, and took it.

American Marine

The site was remote. To get to the island-based yard you had to walk from the nearest road to a Chinese

village, and thence by sampan to the island. Just three months after Fleming started at the shipyard, Super Typhoon Wanda made landfall. When the eye passed over the building where Fleming was living, he drove to a hill that overlooked Hang Hau Village and the American Marine yard. From his vantage point the scene was "apocalyptic." He could see fires raging in surrounding areas. The storm surge reached 17' (5.2m), submerging much of the yard, and breaking waves swept through the buildings. Winds reached 160 mph (258 kmh) and 12" (305mm) of rain fell. At the yard, wherever there were no boats inside to hold them up, buildings collapsed, documents and blueprints were ruined, and offices shattered. Recovery of the physical plant became Fleming's first order of business; his education in boatbuilding would follow.

American Marine's early products were small runabouts built at the bottling plant under the supervision of Joseph Kong (later of boatbuilders Kong and Halvorsen). However, the company realized there was little money in building small boats, and expanded its operation to build larger, more sophisticated vessels for the American market. It received early orders from Western expatriates, and the Newton family identified their market: bigger boats to be sold in the United States.

As business grew, American Marine built a variety of custom sail and power boats in plank-on-frame and plywood. Included in this mix were a few semi-production designs, including the Wanderer, designed by Bill Garden, and what was known as the

school in Scotland. His childhood was influenced by cataclysmic world events. He was 10 years old when World War II ended, and his father, a career Royal Air Force officer, constantly moved his family around the United Kingdom.

After secondary school Fleming had little interest in university. Seeking a more hands-on education instead, he enrolled in a five-year Aviation Engineering Apprenticeship administered by the British aircraft manufacturer De Havilland. After graduating he moved through a succession of jobs while satisfying a wanderlust that took him from a mica mine in Rhodesia to a sales position in Hong Kong. When

Always ready for travel and adventure, a young Tony Fleming, left, and colleagues pose with a former British Royal Air Force runway-control vehicle they drove from London to Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, and back.





Crews inspect and shore up the American Marine boatbuilding facility in Junk Bay, Hong Kong, in the aftermath of Super Typhoon Wanda, which hit September 1, 1962, just three months after Fleming began overseeing engineering for the yard.

born. It was the turning point in the company's history—and my own.”

While working the shop floor at American Marine, Fleming familiarized himself with the myriad details involved in building a boat; he also began to scrutinize production. In reviewing the Grand Banks production line, which was producing roughly three boats per month, he identified several weaknesses, the most significant of which was that all three boats were started and finished simultaneously.

He proposed starting a new build every 10 days, which would mean a vessel would be completed every 10 days. The plan was initially met with skepticism. Undaunted, Fleming slowly converted production to his revised scheme, promoting himself to de facto production manager in the process. After some refinement, the numbers on his new plan spoke for themselves—the construction time for a GB 36 (11m) went from four months to just six weeks, and the cycle time for the construction jig

was reduced to one week, with one day being the fastest time a hull was ever planked. With the success of the GB 36, other models quickly followed—the GB 32, 42 and 57 (9.8m, 12.8m, and 17.4m)—as well as an Art DeFever pilothouse design called the Alaskan, and even a center-cockpit motorsailer called the Magellan.

At American Marine, Fleming also witnessed the role precarious financing would play for a boatbuilder. At one point in 1964 it was revealed that American Marine was in debt to the bank for over \$4 million U.S. Strict measures were instituted, including the requirement for a bank officer to countersign every check written by American Marine, and a mandate to hire an independent auditor to oversee finances.

Fleming moved with the company during its gradual transition from Hong Kong to Singapore in 1969, which is also when the company began the transition from timber to fiberglass construction. Fleming was made engineering and development manager. He designed, tested, and built new models and concepts, including the Laguna series express cruiser; it represented a radical change for American Marine as it was not only fiberglass but also planing, fast, and powered by twin V8 turbocharged diesels.

An early challenge involved steering. The boat simply wouldn't respond to the helm at speed. After much testing, which included replacing rudders several times, the problem was solved by installing cavitation plates above

Chanteyman, designed by Angelman and Davies. Both models would later be described as early examples of the now immensely popular recreational trawler-yacht, and were the seeds that would bear fruit for American Marine for decades to come. Fleming: “Bob Newton [John's father] had identified a boat called *Spray*, based on the design of a New England fishing boat, which he felt could form the basis of a new production boat. It was designed by Ken Smith, and unlike the Chanteyman, this boat had a hard-chine hull, which made it possible to make up the frames on the loft floor, which could then be set up on a jig and assembled, together with precut planks, chines, and keels into a hull built upside down. I can remember John Newton with an open atlas on the desk trying to figure out what to call the boat. He finally settled on the fishing area off the coast of Newfoundland. Thus was the Grand Banks

In a cloud of smoke from firecrackers, a custom sailboat slides down the timber launching ways, lubricated with tallow, at the American Marine yard. In 1963 the company began building the immensely popular Grand Banks series of trawler-yachts, first in wood and later in fiberglass.



COURTESY TONY FLEMING (BOTH)

Learning the Job on the Job

When I first joined American Marine, I did a variety of mostly technical jobs working out details on a wide range of custom boats. I really had no idea what I was doing, so I kind of figured it out as I went along, not always getting it

right. I was employed by the Newtons [Robert, John, and Whit] because they wanted someone with an engineering background. One of my bibles was Skene's Elements of Yacht Design. I had to learn about moisture content in wood and build a homemade kiln as a result of a wet wood fiasco.

Then I learned how to do production and figured out the systems to control and run production with the wooden boats. I also did QC [quality control] and developed all the checklists. I did a lot of production engineering, figuring out how to get the cost out of the boats, as well as problem solving

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the rudders, and ultimately by a new rudder design. But the model line was cursed by the high fuel prices of the early 1970s oil crises, and a balky proprietary engine along with double-digit interest rates. Production ceased after 170 were built.

The Grand Banks line was converted to fiberglass amidst deep secrecy; not even the dealers were told about this radical shift. The change was risky. Fleming and others at American Marine believed that the market for wood Grand Banks would evaporate if word got out that they were transitioning to fiberglass, which would leave the factory with nothing to build and no income to pay for fiberglass tooling. They pulled off the transition, and the first fiberglass GB 36 was produced in 1973. At the time, roughly 3,000 people worked at American Marine in Hong Kong and Singapore, and more than 350 in the United States, producing one boat per day. But that's as good as it would get. A crippling financial crisis was about to befall American Marine and much of the industrialized world.

Fleming: "It was into this already precarious situation that the winds of change arrived without warning in the form of the oil embargo and soaring fuel prices, which resulted in long lines at fuel pumps in the U.S.A. Sales dropped to virtually zero, but the yards, with their large payrolls to satisfy, continued to ship boats to the company-owned dealerships to convert the latter's bank facilities into cash back at the factories. For the second time in 10 years, bankruptcy loomed. Finally, in 1974, at the banks' insistence through the actions of the receiver, operations in the U.S.A. and Hong Kong were closed down, as were the various peripheral operations.

"The Newton family lost their company, and the workforce in Singapore was reduced from 1,800 to 350. A

and value analysis. All this was self-taught by what I call applied common sense, and reading books.

I also wrote the manual for the boats, and this required redesigning the electrical system so that the startup procedure made sense. American Marine set up a marina in Hong Kong,

and I also ran that, which included dealing with typhoons and storms.

Once I moved to Singapore I set up an engineering-and-development section, which not only designed new boats and made all the tooling, but also carried out research and solved problems on the boats. When the company

had a magazine, I used to answer all the letters. For a while I was known as Mr. Grand Banks.

I was put in overall charge of production in Singapore and developed all the charts and systems to allow us to build as many as 12 boats per month.

—Tony Fleming

handful of us retained our jobs, but the future appeared grim.”

Managerial machinations at American Marine over the next 10 years are far too complex to cover here. In brief, Fleming was drawn into a proposed “coup” wherein he would have taken his boss’s place as director. Although he was extremely uncomfortable with this proposition, with the supporting vote of the majority of the board members, he reluctantly agreed. Ultimately, the coup failed when one of the board members who had formerly agreed to the change withdrew his support at the eleventh hour, but not before details were shared among all board members and the director. Fleming’s days at American Marine were over. He departed after 23 years, in February 1985.

Building a Boatbuilder

At the age of 50 Fleming was out of work with no real prospects. When his contract with American Marine concluded, the Singaporean government gave him, after 17 years of residency and significant contributions to the country’s economy, two weeks to vacate. Local banks, having been notified of his departure from American Marine, promptly cancelled his credit cards.

Fleming’s marriage had ended in divorce a few years earlier, and his daughters were now in college, leaving him with only the responsibilities of tuition and alimony payments. He began conducting research, laying the groundwork for new employment, traveling back to Singapore, then on to Hong Kong, and finally to Taiwan, a mecca for building recreational fiberglass boats. It seemed to him the ideal place to start the next phase of his career. He stayed with Tim Ellis, a friend he’d first met in Singapore. Ellis, a surveyor overseeing new build projects for his clients, showed Fleming around and helped him get his bearings in Taiwan.

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Next, Fleming traveled to Southern California to visit longtime friend and former American Marine co-worker Anton Emmerton. Fleming and Emmerton had first met sailing at the Royal Hong Kong Yacht Club in 1962, when the latter was in the British Army serving in Hong Kong. After a number of discussions the two decided to enter into a partnership, creating their own boatbuilding company, with Fleming handling the technical side and Emmerton the firm's business.

Initially, they believed that the place to set up shop was Cochin, India, with a yard Fleming had visited a few years earlier. The Indian company already had molds for a round-bilge trawler design called Bristol, which had originated in New England. The plan was for Emmerton to market the vessel in the U.S., while Fleming kept an eye on production in India. After an initial meeting with the yard owners it was clear they were in no rush to proceed. Fleming, on the other hand, was living on dwindling savings.

The partners returned to Southern California for the Newport Boat Show,

where the quality of some boats built in Taiwan surprised them and led them to reconsider that country as a place to build. They also boarded a Bayliner 45 Pilothouse, a design that Fleming found very appealing, prompting Emmerton to say, "Alaskan!"—the aforementioned Grand Banks design that relied on a pilothouse as a central feature. They hadn't considered this design, but their plans were evolving.

After the show, it was settled; they decided to build a pilothouse design in Taiwan, and Fleming Yachts was born. (They agreed to the name only after considering many other options, including Aleutian and Falmouth. A mutual friend suggested Fleming, and it stuck.) To look at the original drawings for inspiration and ideas, the partners sought out designer Bob Doris, who had designed all the Alaskans except the 46. Doris, by then retired, had no interest in taking on the new design project. Their second choice, Ed Monk, asked for a fee of \$25,000, which the nascent Fleming Yachts couldn't afford. Finally, they called on Larry Drake, who had previously

worked for American Marine. Drake agreed to produce the initial design for a modest fee, with a second payment after the first boat shipped, plus a royalty on every hull built. (As a mark of the manner in which Fleming Yachts did, and continues to do, business, royalty payments were made until Drake's death, and continue to be made to Drake's widow to this day.)

Finding the right yard was the next order of business. Tim Ellis once again provided guidance and suggestions for yards in Taiwan, where they met with a range of potential builders spread around different parts of the island, all located inland, away from ports and harbors. Fleming and Emmerton eventually met with John Sun, manager of the Tung Hwa Industrial Company, located about three miles (4.8 km) from the nearest town of Wan Tan, and surrounded by rice paddies. They learned during these discussions that Fleming and Sun had mutual acquaintances from American Marine.

Fleming and Emmerton returned to Taipei to consider their options. They both liked Tung Hwa, and it seemed

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COURTESY TONY FLEMING (BOTH)

Left—Building the deck plug for the first Fleming, a 50-footer (15.2m) designed by Larry Drake, at the Tung Hwa Industrial Company, in Taiwan. **Right**—Fleming and Frank Ling hammer a ceremonial last nail into the hull plug frame for the same boat. Fleming had the tooling made for a 55' (16.8m) hull that was dammed-off to produce the 50' model.

to be the only yard interested in the project. Of his own volition John Sun traveled to Taipei to meet with them again, and after more discussions a deal was struck: the yard would pay for the tooling in return for three orders by the time the tooling was completed—six months ahead of the first boat being completed. In addition,

Fleming Yachts had to sell at least three boats within eight months of completion of the tooling; if they failed to do so, the yard could take possession of the tooling and the rights to build and market the boat. Fleming made it clear that he would remain at the yard through toolmaking and completion of the first vessel.

The partners returned to California, where they worked on establishing the vessel's basic design, layout, appearance, speed, range, etc., details they then passed on to Drake to incorporate in the final plans.

Building the first Fleming yacht was one thing, selling it was another matter entirely, and much hung on the ability

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to secure contracts for new builds. Fleming was friendly with yacht broker Chuck Hovey of Chuck Hovey Yacht sales in Newport Beach. A former Grand Banks dealer, Hovey had a hard-and-fast rule against becoming a dealer for any Taiwanese-built boats. He agreed to make an exception for Fleming Yachts, a company that had yet to build a finished boat.

In October 1985 Fleming departed for Taiwan carrying Drake's completed drawings and ready to start the tooling and construction of hull #1, the Fleming 50 (15.2m). The original plan had been for a 53-footer (16.2m), but Hovey had strongly recommended they change it to 50. They agreed. However, in his time at American Marine Fleming had been asked many times to stretch designs, not an easy process, particularly for those with faux-plank seams as the Fleming was intended to have. With this in mind, and with Drake's approval, Fleming made the tooling for a 55' (16.8m), dammed-off at 50'.

While Fleming oversaw tooling construction he pored over the lines plan,

and the profile and deck construction drawings, becoming convinced they were clunky and more suited to wood than fiberglass (Drake's experience was primarily with wood). Applying liberal quantities of white-out, Fleming reworked the drawings.

Meanwhile, early work at the yard involved trial after trial with experienced staff who were set in their ways. Fleming repeatedly argued with the lead mold builder over the dimensions of the faux-plank seams. The yard's approach resulted in much subtler lines, which looked wrong to Fleming. Fortunately, he had taken the precaution of measuring the dimensions of the planking lines on his own Grand Banks 42, confirming his belief that the yard's dimensions were, while not wrong, not what he had envisioned, and with this confirmation the mold builder was persuaded to proceed with the Fleming faux-plank plan.

In addition to these early and somewhat predictable boatbuilding challenges, Fleming faced hurdles of a different sort as well. Taiwan was drab, depressing, and still under

martial law; few signs were in English, few residents spoke English, and Fleming knew few people. Adding insult to injury, during this period the Taiwanese currency continued to gain strength against the U.S. dollar, obliging the yard to renegotiate costs on several occasions.

Slowly but surely the tooling was completed and the first hull took shape, while back in California Emmerton routinely prodded Fleming about why it was all taking so long. In fact, the Fleming 50 came together rather quickly. In November 1986, just 13 months after Fleming's arrival in Taiwan, the first Fleming, with all its major and minor systems installed, rolled out of the yard amidst strings of exploding firecrackers. Because of martial law, conducting sea trials in Taiwan at the time was difficult, costly, and time-consuming. The partners opted to conduct them in California.

Roughly three weeks later, the first boat arrived in California. While there were a few issues, the model was a success. Hull #2, built without Fleming's continuous oversight, was somewhat

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The first completed Fleming comes through the gates of the Tung Hwa yard. Because the country was under martial law in 1986, sea trials would have been prohibitively expensive and time consuming, so the boat was shipped to California, where it was formally launched and thoroughly tested before being turned over to her owner.

more problematic. Among other things the stuffing boxes leaked chronically, ultimately requiring replacement. To

save money, the partners replaced them while the boat was afloat, with Fleming doing the diving.

Growth Years

By January 1988 hull #6 had arrived at Chuck Hovey's dealership. However, Fleming Yachts continued to encounter challenges. Emmerton had had a heart attack, and Fleming broke his leg in Mexico, where they briefly considered moving production to stem the falling profits caused by the ever-strengthening Taiwanese dollar. Quality-control problems with the yard remained an issue for each build, and while six boats had been completed, they were dropping behind in orders, raising the specter of Tung Hwa taking over the Fleming molds and product.

Just in time, sales picked up as a result of more advertising, magazine articles, and word of mouth. In October 1988 Fleming delivered a boat for an Austrian living in Italy. His agreement to purchase the boat came with one stipulation: he wanted to take delivery in Southern California, and then take it on its own bottom to Spain. This was a tall order, as more fuel would need to be carried for the ocean crossing. To secure the added

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The Tung Hwa yard still builds all Fleming Yachts. **Right**—Two Flemings in the building shop. Hulls are hand-laid solid fiberglass and vinylester resin. Systems, including stabilizers, modern common-rail diesel engines, and robust electrical installations, have been refined by decades of field-testing and customer feedback.



capacity, the 50 was stretched to 53', necessitating that the dam in the mold be moved aft 3' (0.9m)—an eventuality Fleming had planned for.

After a brief sea trial to Catalina Island, the owner proclaimed himself and the boat ready to head to Spain, departing just before Christmas 1988. Carrying additional fuel on deck, he arrived safely at his destination 9,300 miles later. One of his stops along the way was La Guaira, Venezuela, where the Fleming 53 attracted the attention of the country's former Grand Banks dealer. He inquired about the builder and was stunned to hear it was Fleming and Emmerton, both of whom he knew. The encounter ultimately led to the sale of three Flemings there.

Left—The company continues to develop new models such as this Fleming 58 (17.7m), shown here in the yard's test tank. It was the first design whose development was not presided over by Tony Fleming, who removed himself from day-to-day operations in 2008.



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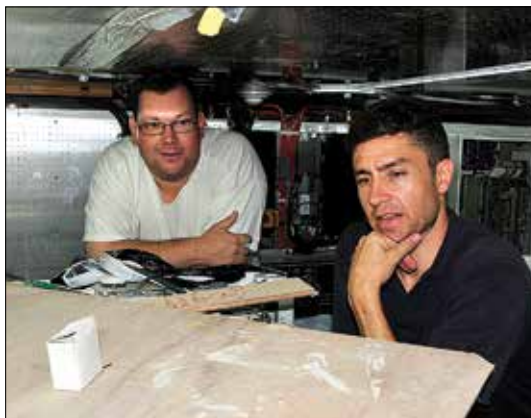
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Back in Taiwan, Fleming concentrated his efforts on improving quality and efficiency at the yard, where management had changed, dramatically improving communication and productivity. Business continued to improve also, and Fleming found a new way to market the boats when he accepted what would be the first of many offers to cruise with a customer; on this occasion it was aboard a Fleming 55 (the dam had been removed entirely now) in Scandinavia. The pattern would eventually become familiar and profitable, as Fleming would cruise to interesting locations and then write magazine articles covering the passage, thereby providing exposure Fleming yachts never could have secured as straight advertising.

Then the U.S. luxury tax of 1990 devastated the marine industry. Fleming Yachts was well enough established by that time to survive those lean years, albeit barely. Business remained secure enough, however, to establish a toehold on the East Coast in the form of Burr



STEVE D'ANTONIO

Yacht Sales, a then-prominent Bertram dealer located just outside Annapolis, Maryland.

In the summer of 1993 Emmerton had another heart attack, and the sad news of his death reached Fleming, who was cruising in Norway. Fleming's daughter Nicky joined the company that same year.

Demand for Flemings continued to rise. During the first Fleming rendezvous, organized by Hovey and held in Sidney, British Columbia, in September 1997, one owner asked

Troubleshooting in the engine-room of a boat in build, the new generation of Fleming management includes a solid engineering team of former Fleming captain Duncan Cowie, left, and Tony Fleming's nephew Adi Shard, right.

about a rumored 75 (22.9m). Fleming confirmed plans existed but were inactive. Within a few minutes he had three attendees offering

deposits on a new 75, and he relented under the pressure of popular demand.

As production increased, the company added key staff including Fleming's nephew Adi Shard, who after completing his university studies, joined the engineering team in 1998, at the yard in Kaohsiung. Fleming insisted that Shard learn Chinese. The yard's engineering staff was rounded out with the addition of another British expatriate, Duncan Cowie, who had served as captain for one of Fleming's customers.





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The first Fleming 75 was delivered in late 2000. While the yard had made it clear it could build the 75, transporting the boat the few miles from the yard at Tung Hwa to the port was a painful exercise, necessitating the temporary raising of hundreds of power and telephone lines and traffic signals, 34 vehicles, and more than 100 people. The three-day procession could move only during the evening so as not to disrupt the prodigious traffic on the route. The cost was greater than the 6,000-mile ship passage to California. In the coming years, as more 75s were built, the yard paid to have all the obstructions permanently raised or moved.

Thirteen 55s and three 75s were shipped in 2002, and while the increased sales and revenue were welcome, Fleming realized that there remained a gap in offerings. Too few 55 owners had the means or desire to move up to a 75, yet many clearly wanted a larger Fleming. He started to draft plans for what would become a 65 (19.8m). Larry Drake had died, and Fleming selected naval architect Doug Sharp to assist with the new boat.

Fleming was intent on designing this boat differently. With Fleming yachts firmly established as a respected and financially stable builder, he decided to keep the first 65 within the company, and then allow himself time to use, evaluate, and vet the design, as well as features and products he wouldn't otherwise risk on a conventional buyer. Additionally, Fleming's ownership of the boat would afford ample photographic and editorial opportunities now and in the future.

Fleming Yachts Build List

Fleming 50 (15.2m)	11
Fleming 53 (16.2m)	17
Fleming 55 (16.8m)	204
Fleming 58 (17.8m)	4
Fleming 65 (19.8m)	35
Fleming 72 (21.9m)	1
Fleming 75 (22.9m)	12
Fleming 78 (23.8m)	3

It was an unusual move for a production boatbuilder, and one that would pay dividends in many forms. The first Fleming 65 was *Venture*.

Among other new concepts that Fleming investigated and eventually decided not to adopt were diesel-electric hybrid propulsion systems and gyro stabilization. In spite of the fact that neither of these products made the final cut, experiments of this sort were precisely why 65-001 wasn't made available to the boat-buying public—it was a platform for testing and evaluation.

The 65 went on to receive critical acclaim, winning *Boat International's* Boat-of-the-Year award at Cannes in 2006, a crowning achievement for Fleming, as it would likely be the last new design he would develop. The reins of the company and its day-to-day operations were passed to his daughter Nicky, Adi Shard, and Duncan Cowie. In 2008 Fleming removed himself from the payroll and into the role of field tester of new designs and equipment, and Fleming Yacht's goodwill ambassador.

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Left—Tony Fleming now field-tests new designs and equipment for the company, cruising the yachts extensively in a range of conditions and exotic locations. **Above**—The Seatorque shaft system on his Fleming 65 Venture was tested during a cruise to Alaska's Prince William Sound in 2013.

Fleming would go on to indulge several passions as he fulfilled these new responsibilities, including cruising, for the first time aboard his own boat, to remote locations, writing, blogging, and lecturing about his passages aboard *Venture*, and making video documentaries.

Since my first meeting with Tony Fleming in 2008, he has cruised *Venture* to Alaska twice, and on *Venture II*, the

European specification 65, he cruised the canals of Germany, displaying the boat at the Dusseldorf Boat Show, then on to Scotland's Western Isles and Hebrides, the Faroe Islands, and finally circumnavigating Iceland before selling the boat in 2013. This phase of his life—cruising, writing, and making movies—is one he enjoys, and like the boats he does it on, it's been a lifetime in the making.

PBB

About the Author: For many years a full-service yard manager, Steve now works with boat builders and owners and others in the industry as "Steve D'Antonio Marine Consulting." He is the technical editor of *Professional BoatBuilder*, and is writing a book on marine systems, to be published by McGraw-Hill/International Marine.







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