



# THE COMMUTER CHALLENGE

THE PALM BEACH 70—THE BUILDER'S NEW FLAGSHIP—HAS BEEN COMPARED TO A MODERN COMMUTER YACHT. THIS MADE THE EDITORS WONDER: COULD IT BEAT MODERN TRANSPORTATION TO MANHATTAN? A RACE WAS BORN.  
BY DANIEL HARDING JR.



RPM	KNOTS	GPH	RANGE	DB(A)
600	6.8	2.5	4,311	58
1000	10.6	9.0	1,867	60
1500	16.3	26	994	63
2000	24.5	60	647	68
2450	30.3	94	511	71

Seas: Calm | Water: 1/5 Full | Fuel: 3/4 Full

LOA: 74'11"  
 Beam: 19'2"  
 Draft: 4'3"  
 Displ.: 70,500 lbs.  
 Fuel: 1,585 gal.  
 Water: 290 gal.  
 Test Power: 2/1,000-hp Volvo Penta D13s  
 Optional Power: 2/1,000-hp Volvo Penta D13-IPS1350s  
 Price: Upon Request

PHOTOS BY SAUNDERS YACHTWORKS

### Jazz floated through the first radios, the economy boomed

and consumerism soared. Flappers challenged the status quo and the Model T rolled off production lines and into American driveways for \$260 apiece. Babe Ruth signed with the Yankees and F. Scott Fitzgerald penned *The Great Gatsby*. The Roaring Twenties were a time of great prosperity in our country. It was also a time when titans of industry and leaders of Wall Street began to look for new ways to commute to Manhattan from their Long Island and Connecticut homes.

In 1902, the *New York Herald* reported an expansion of a trend: "An enormous fleet of private yachts carry owners at racing speed twice a day from their great estates to the wharf on Manhattan Island nearest their offices."

The race to build sleek, beautiful and fast yachts to hastily transport these men to and from the city was on. The term "commuter yacht" entered the marine lexicon.

Sitting in New Jersey traffic, I took a call from Palm Beach's new Head of Sales and Marketing, Peter Truslow, who brought me up to speed on the recently launched Palm Beach 70. With a long, sweeping sheer and stunning good looks, he said it resembled a "modern commuter yacht." I'd seen the renderings and early photos from the factory in Malaysia; I certainly couldn't argue with him.

The Manhattan skyline was just behind my left shoulder and my tires were planted in bumper-to-bumper traffic. "What would it be like to own a commuter yacht today?" I wondered. "With today's mass transit options readily available in many cities, could commuting by boat be a viable or practical option?" An experiment was born.

As the control for my experiment, I challenged a somewhat disgruntled Managing Editor Simon Murray to a race from Rowayton, Connecticut to Wall Street's iconic Charging Bull statue.

"Simon, I have good news and bad news," I said that Monday in the office. An eyebrow raised; it's a phrase he's heard before. "I really don't want to wear the survival suit again," he replied with a smirk. (If you watch our videos online or on social media, you'll understand why.)

"Well, no, you don't have to wear the suit," I assured him. And with that I detailed my plan for the race. Always down for an interesting story, he was excited about the concept. Then his smile faded. "So this means I have to take Metro North?" he asked. His competitiveness quickly overtook his disappointment in being on the train instead of aboard the Palm Beach. "Okay, I'm in. Let's do it."

**The gentleman's wager began dockside at Rowayton Boatworks**, where we met the 70. Long, sleek and muscular with a small, forward-facing lounge cut into the bow, it looked like the well-adjusted offspring of a 20s commuter yacht and the Tom Fexas-designed Midnight Lace. "This isn't the worst thing I've asked you to do, but it's close," I said to Simon as we eyed my ride.

He took the challenge in stride, boasting his New Jersey roots and his New York City navigating prowess. He even showed up sporting a suit and tie; we've worked together for three years and I've never actually seen him wear a tie.

I stowed my gear aboard while photographer Onne van der Wal got settled aboard our chase boat, the auto-inspired Palm Beach GT50—a boat that could easily double as a modern commuter yacht itself. It was time to race. Simon and I shook hands. "3, 2, 1 ... GO!"

The 70 meandered out of Five Mile River and toward Long Island Sound,



*Like all proper competitions, the start of the race between the Palm Beach 70 and mass transit started with a handshake and a countdown. One thing was certain: Both editors wanted to win.*



PHOTOS BY SAUNDERS YACHTWORKS



*Navigating the East River can make for a scenic, yet chaotic race track.*

leaving the rocky shoreline and multi-million-dollar mansions behind. With the optional Volvo Penta D13-1000s (IPS 1350s are also available, and I predict, will be a popular choice) under the hood, we had 30.3 knots to play with. As we climbed onto plane, I couldn't help but notice how svelte the wake behind the boat was, more of a ripple than a wave. It's the signature of Founder Mark Richards, and the mark of an efficient running surface.

Alas, we wouldn't keep the throttle pinned for long. Boat traffic and obstacles continued to rear their head as we covered ground toward the East River. (Not to mention the fact that it was an owner's boat and hitting a submerged object was not a risk any of the crew wanted to take.) Eventually we settled into a more responsible speed in the 20- to 25-knot range. Still, we ate up the miles in serene comfort. The sun was shining and a cool breeze passed through the flybridge. The early (albeit predictable) verdict: Way more fun than a train.

We passed Rikers Island to port and a gray, slab-sided ship to starboard that I was told serves as prison overflow. The prison ship made me think of Simon, joined by Digital Director John Turner, crammed into the Metro North. Would they quit immediately after meeting at the bull, or would they give me two weeks notice? I wondered. A group text chain—if it was to be believed—showed that they, too, were steadily knocking off the miles.

After reaching the city, they made their way from the main section of Grand Central to the subway and Lower Manhattan. In the 20s and 30s, many commuter yachts would anchor up along the East River and take a tender to shore. As we crawled through a 5-mph zone, I wondered if swimming to shore and racing in on foot would disqualify me. Risking my life trying to get across FDR Drive quelled my competitive spirit just a bit.

Once clear of the 5-mph zones, the 70 ran a buttonhook around the bottom of Manhattan and ducked into North Cove Marina. Our friendly banter through text had gone quiet; the race was still too close to call.

Before our lines were neatly tied, Creative Director Erin Kenney, who had been aboard for the trip with her husband Bob, handed me a camera and leapt to the dock. Her competitiveness would be invaluable, or so I thought. We had 0.7 miles to cover to get to the bull. Just as a mild cramp began to form in my hamstring, I realized I had left my wallet aboard the 70. Erin paid for a cab. On a normal day I would be ashamed to pay to be driven a half mile, but as the old saying goes, close only counts in horseshoes and hand grenades, and all is fair in love and boat racing.



*Simon can taste the thrill of victory as he runs from Grand Central to the subway and ultimately to the Charging Bull statue. The author does his best to not be a sore loser.*



*Sweeping lines and the stars and stripes: That's a winning combination.*

As we approached, we spied a horde of tourists surrounding the massive bronze bull. We leapt from the cab and jogged in, just in time ... to see Simon and John leaning against a barrier and shooting the breeze. "How close was it?" I asked while doing my best to hide my disappointment. "Just about 12 minutes ... it was closer than we thought!"

Simon and I posed for a few pictures, along with tourists waiting in two neat lines to be photographed with either the bull's head or, err, nether region. New York is a strange place, I thought to myself when I saw the line for the latter group.

I wanted to win the race—the tortoise beat the hare, but it doesn't mean the hare has to be happy about it. But what modern transportation boasts in speed, the Palm Beach 70 more than made up for in style and comfort. I commuted to the city for almost a year some years ago, and I have to say that I never arrived more calm and refreshed than when I arrived by boat.

**Dark, billowing storm clouds poured** in from the west as the now-reunited crew began our trip back to Connecticut. Just beyond our transom, the New York City skyline darkened, transforming the city into a twisted version of Batman's Gotham. The squall whipped up quickly. The mainsail of a schooner ripped in half and flapped violently in the wind, an over-stimulating sunset cruise for a boatload of tourists, no doubt. Palm Beach vs. Train shifted suddenly to Palm Beach vs. Rain.

You need only squint and use a little imagination to travel back in time to the 20s, watching a wooden commuter yacht shoot like an arrow through the gray mist and hook a left around Manhattan back to the Sound.

The Great Depression and the burgeoning highway system on Long Island would usher in the end of the commuter yachts as we know them. Today, a few famous models from that era have been lovingly restored and still ply the seas, but mostly this piece of yachting lore has been forgotten to the annals of yesteryear.

One hundred years. Only a lifetime if you're lucky. So much of the world has changed in the last century. The New York skyline erupted, technology has advanced at blinding speeds and to quote Brooks in *The Shawshank Redemption*, "The world went and got itself in a big damn hurry." But what hasn't changed, and in fact has only grown, is the sport of boating. The elements that enticed the Wall Street execs of the 20s—the sun, the water, the relaxing sound of water sliding along a planing hull—those elements, and classically styled yachts like the Palm Beach 70, remain timeless. □