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34 Convertible Boat Test Report

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– Tom Fexas



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All The Boat One Could Want

By Tom Fexas

When writing my Rooster Tales column, which appears elsewhere in this magazine, I went searching for the perfect example of a vessel around 35 feet that would provide all the amenities a family of four would ever need while cruising in a small, relatively affordable package that is easy to handle. This sent me on a hunt through magazines and on the internet for the “perfect” 35-footer. I looked at everything in this size range and although I really do not like to review boats that are commonplace — no matter how well they are designed — I have to admit that the boat that best illustrated my thoughts was the Silverton 34 Convertible.

Tom Thompson’s excellent sea trial article reviewing this boat appeared in Sea’s February, 2004 issue; now we will look at this boat strictly from a design standpoint to see why it works so well.

NO FLOATING BEACH BALL

It is difficult to make a 34-footer with a flybridge and engines stuffed under the saloon look like anything other than a floating beach ball; however, the Silverton stylists did an outstanding job in masking the height of the vessel via various styling tricks.

Notice how the high freeboard is handled. The hull proper goes up to the hull/deck joint (where the stainless steel rubrail is), which gives the illusion of a long, low hull. Above this, the hull’s freeboard is raised dramatically by incorporating a vertical section in the deck mold above the hull/deck joint, thus providing the virtual freeboard necessary to balance the rather high deckhouse.

The catwalks or side decks are above this built-up “freeboard,” thus allowing the superstructure to be raised to accommodate engines below the deckhouse without looking gawky. What is, in effect, a trunk cabin forward (necessary for headroom below) blends nicely into the foredeck.

The overall shape of the superstructure is modern and pleasing with a well-raked windshield and gracefully curved aft ends. The windows are “blacked-out” and are well-shaped in profile (window shape is a very important

ingredient in the overall styling of any vessel). The aft cockpit is protected by an overhang, which not only partially shields the cockpit from the elements but greatly expands the flybridge area topside.

The arch assembly is well-formed, although a bit heavy looking. The aft end of the arch is shaped so it complements the aft end of the deckhouse below. The curve of the forward



Owners enjoy a queen-size innerspring berth in the master stateroom.

bridge face matches that of the lower windshield without resorting to a “brow” over the lower windshield, which is rather clumsy in a boat this size.

And so, we have a pleasingly shaped “envelope” providing a great amount of space for interior accommodations. The hull beam has been maximized to 13 feet, 10 inches, which really make the interior work.

THE COCKPIT

The aft cockpit, although a bit short at 7 feet, carries nearly the full beam of the vessel, which makes it fairly spacious. Into this cockpit is incorporated a baitwell/storage area aft, an optional wet bar starboard forward and molded-in fiberglass steps leading up to the flybridge. The flybridge steps and wet bar area consume a good portion of the cockpit real estate, and it might have been a good idea to use a conventional ladder to the flybridge.



The 34's elegant, convenient, fully equipped galley.

THE INTERIOR

The interior of the boat is masterfully laid out, with opposing settees and a dining table fitted to the port side. Thankfully, the forward windshields have not been blacked out (which is so popular these days) with three large curved glass panels, giving the saloon a feeling of great spaciousness.

Down a couple of steps is the surprisingly large galley to starboard, opposite of which is a guest stateroom with upper and lower berths partially tucked under the port saloon settee. Forward of the guest stateroom is the head — spacious for this boat — opposite of which is the shower compartment.

The placement of the double berth in the forward stateroom is what allows the spacious accommodations. Rather than being an “island” double berth requiring a lot of fore and aft length, the berth is diagonally tucked into the hull forward with a large hanging locker just aft. Headroom throughout is a hefty 6 feet, 6 inches.

THE BRIDGE

A pleasant surprise awaits on the flybridge — which, by means of the generous cockpit overhang and beam — is huge for a boat like this. A large U-shaped settee is fitted aft with a pilot/copilot helm chair forward overlooking the well-laid-out instrument panel.

FAMILY FUN

And so, there you have it – all the boat a family of four to six could ever want.

If I had my druthers I would add one foot to the cockpit. But that's picking nits. This boat provides all the cruising amenities that anybody ever will need. It is easily handled, and at \$222,035 (base price) it is relatively easy to afford and maintain.

All of this enveloped by a seakindly hull capable of twenty-knot cruise speeds.







The Thirty Four Convertible boasts an open, spacious salon and galley area.

History Doesn't Repeat Itself. It Gets Better.

LAKELAND
BOATING

This boat might look familiar. As part of its 35th anniversary celebration, Silverton Marine reintroduced one of its most popular models, the 34 Convertible. In 1972, three years after it opened up shop, the New Jersey boatbuilder brought out the 33 Sedan, the company's first flybridge cruiser that doubled as a fishing boat. Silverton did a bit of refining and then debuted the 34, introducing the classic convertible style that the company maintains today. More than 1,200 were produced – a record number even by today's standards – before the 34 was discontinued in 1995.

Time has changed its appearance, but the 34 Convertible is still an eye-catcher. Although the company has made convertibles both bigger and smaller, Silverton stayed with the top-selling original length of 37 feet, 7 inches. The hull picked up about 16 inches in beam, though. Among other things, this puts more room in the salon, where there's seating along both sides for a conversation area. The dinette is to port and seats four adults, while a couch to starboard holds two. Everyone gets a good view of the entertainment center at the aft port corner of the salon, where an optional TV can be housed. There's also plenty of natural light here – the space is almost completely surrounded by glass. Windows on each side, plus the sliding door to the cockpit, allow for lots of natural ventilation, too. All openings are screened.

The galley on the new 34 is a bit different than the original. Back then, a meal on the water usually meant packing a few sandwiches in an ice chest. Today, you can whip up anything from a BLT to a gourmet meal onboard. There's more room for storage now, plus an upright, double-door refrigerator/freezer. A spacious Corian countertop holds a large deep-basin sink. And you can cook it all up on the double-burner electric stove or in the microwave oven.

Although the first Silverton convertible had limited sleeping arrangements, this 34 has all the comforts of home. Back then, the kids got the one stateroom onboard because they went to bed first, and mom and dad usually bunked on the couch in the salon. Today, the adults get a stateroom, and the little ones get one too. The second actually works well for kids or another couple of adults. It has enough room for two to stand side by side without touching, and the bunk beds are just over 6 feet long. In the master stateroom, there's a double berth with an

innerspring mattress, along with a cedar-lined hanging locker to port. You can put an optional TV and stereo on top of a storage cabinet to starboard. Additional storage is found in three drawers under the berth.

The 34 Convertible has a split head, with the shower stall to starboard, and the toilet and sink to port. The shower is fiberglass-lined and has a comfortable seat. Both an opening port and an exhaust fan provide ventilation. The vanity carries the Corian decor from the galley and includes a designer faucet. A mirrored medicine cabinet above the vanity has an impressive amount of space, and there's more storage in a bin to its left. Yet another cabinet is above the toilet.



The cherry cabinetry features flowing lines with plenty of storage.



Vintage 1985 – over 1,200 34 Convertibles were produced.

This version of the 34 is considerably more stylish than its predecessors. There's a generous use of cherry throughout, including solid wood cabinetry. The decorator fabrics and upholstery are attractive and supple. On the first 34 Convertible, you had to hand pump the water in the sink. Today it's pressurized and runs hot and cold. You can set the cabin mood from soft and romantic to bright party time with dimmer-controlled lighting. Add the ultimate in cabin comfort with climate control from an air conditioner that features reverse-cycle heating. This is the way to live on the water.



The second stateroom sleeps two in comfort.

Topside, the flybridge has ample seating at a U-shaped bench that surrounds a removable table. The captain's and first mate's swivel bucket seats have flip-up bolsters for support to stand while under way. You can cover the flybridge with an optional bimini top and side curtains. A radar arch is available as a factory-installed option, too.

The 34 Convertible's helm is fitted with full engine instrumentation using Faria gauges. It has a tilt steering wheel and dual-lever engine controls. Glendinning electronic controls with a digital synchronizer are optional. You can also select from four optional Raymarine electronics packages that include large-screen displays.

If you want to fish the 34 Convertible, order the optional Fish Pak, which includes six rocket launchers, six rod holders and a tackle locker, along with fresh and raw water washdowns. A storage compartment in the cockpit sole can be fitted with an optional macerator and overboard drain to turn it into a fishbox. You can also order a wetbar/bait prep station that's placed along the cabin bulkhead. Install a refrigerator, an icemaker, or both inside it.

Other cockpit features include an overhang that keeps you out of the weather when moving between the cabin and the flybridge. The transom door comes standard. A swim platform is an option. All shore hookups are conveniently made from a weather-protected compartment in the center of the transom. An anchor windlass is optional.

Silverton offers twin gas and diesel engine packages ranging from 315 to 425 hp each for the 34. Our test boat had a pair of 330-hp Crusader 5.7L multiport-injected blocks, the smallest of the gas choices. I thought they moved the boat quite well, cruising at around 18 knots and topping out at around 24. They will get you where you're going in a reasonable amount of time while still being thrifty with fuel. The Crusaders registered .68 miles per gallon at 3500 rpm. Handling was responsive, both at cruising and slow speeds. Acceleration from a full stop was good, and there was very little bow rise. Midrange throttle response was strong, too. The water was very sloppy the day we tested the 34 Convertible, and I was expecting a good deal of rolling motion on the flybridge. There was some, but it wasn't bad. The boat has the weight to smooth out the swells for a comfortable ride. The sound level at cruising speed was 75 dbA.

The bottom line on the new Silverton 34 Convertible isn't all that different from the first Silverton that came off the line 35 years ago. It's still a good value for the money spent. Considering inflation, today's price might be higher, but the list of standard features is a lot longer. The boat's lines are still classic, but the look is far more sophisticated. With all of this going for it, the new Silverton 34 convertible might prove to be more popular than the original.

A WELCOME UPDATE

FOR ONE OF THE MOST POPULAR BOATS IN HISTORY

By Tom Thompson



The name Silverton is closely linked with the term “convertible”, the boat type that combines sportfishing and cruising in one package. It has been popular for more than a generation, and New Jersey-based Silverton Marine has been setting the standard for how it’s done.

This year, Silverton Marine celebrates its 35th anniversary by bringing back something from the past. The new 34 Convertible marks this significant milestone.

The 33 Sedan, introduced in 1971, was Silverton’s first true flybridge cruiser that doubled as a fishing boat – however, the original 34 Convertible was brought out in 1978. More than 1,200 were built – a record number even by today’s standards – before the 34 was discontinued in 1995.

When Silverton began the complete redesign of its line a few years ago, a new 34 was planned in tribute to the company’s past.

SIZED JUST RIGHT

The 34-foot length seems to be just right for a convertible. Although Silverton has made both larger and smaller convertibles, this size has the most appeal to buyers. It works out to be an ideal dimension for day trips as well as cruising long distances, yet it can be equipped with everything a serious angler could want.

Over the years, the beam has grown from 12 feet, 6 inches to 13 feet, 10 inches, allowing for more cabin room, especially in the saloon. Seating is along both sides, making for a large conversation area.

Four adults fit at the dinette to port, and the settee to starboard holds two more. All have a good view of the optional television in the entertainment center in the saloon’s aft port corner.

There’s a nearly 360-degree view of the water from the saloon. A pair of opening windows on either side, plus a sliding screen panel in the doorway to the cockpit, bring in welcome breezes.

One of the biggest changes in the 34 is the galley. A generation ago, dining on the water meant packing a few sandwiches in an icebox. The new 34 Convertible, in contrast, has what you could consider a gourmet kitchen.

The old icebox has been replaced by a double-door upright dual-voltage refrigerator/freezer. There’s a Corian®

countertop for preparing food that holds a deep stainless steel sink with hot and cold pressurized water.

Cold sandwiches are also a thing of the past. You can cook things up on a two-burner electric stove or in a microwave oven.

MORE ROOM FOR MORE PEOPLE

The original Silverton 34 only had one stateroom, although there was a foldout settee in the saloon. The kids usually got the stateroom so Mom and Dad could stay up late.

Today, not only do the kids get their own room, but the parents get some privacy, too. The settee still converts to a double berth, so the boat can comfortably sleep six.

The comfort level in the sleeping quarters is a generation removed from the original. The new 34’s second stateroom has a pair of bunk-style berths that will holed 6-foot adults. There’s even enough room for two people to change clothes without bumping into each other.

Mom and dad get the luxury of a double berth with an innerspring mattress. They can stay up late and watch television or listen to the stereo (both are options for the stateroom). There’s plenty of storage, including a cedar-lined hanging locker and drawers under the berth.

A split head keeps the facilities from being tied up by one person. The 34 Convertible’s shower stall is on the starboard side and the toilet and sink compartment is to port.

The fiberglass-lined shower features a large seat, along with an opening port and an exhaust fan. The vanity countertop in the opposite compartment matches the galley’s Corian surfaces. There’s a remarkable amount of storage here, including a deep medicine cabinet behind the mirror above the vanity, a large bin to its left and another cabinet above the head.

THE RIGHT LOOK, TOO

By today’s standards, the mostly fiberglass and vinyl interior of the original Silverton 34 would be considered utilitarian. Solid cherry wood cabinetry, attractive decorator fabrics and supple upholstery materials create an inviting atmosphere in the new 34.

You can control the interior lighting to provide everything from a soft, romantic atmosphere to a daylight-bright reading light. For the ultimate in climate control, you can order the optional air conditioning – something unheard-of on this size boat back in the 1970s.

Flybridge accommodations on the new 34 are in keeping with the overall upgrade in comfort. A pair of plush swiveling bucket seats for the captain and the first mate convert to standup bolsters with the flip of a panel. When not under way, they can turn to face the U-shaped lounge behind them — which can be served by an optional table.

The helm features custom Faria gauges as a standard feature. There's room on each side of the console for large-screen electronics.

A tilt steering wheel is flanked by dual-lever engine controls. You can keep out of the weather with an optional Bimini top and full side curtains.

Selecting Silverton's optional Fish Pak for the cockpit of the 34 Convertible is the first step in turning the boat into a tournament contender. The package includes rocket launchers, six rod holders and a tackle locker, as well as freshwater and saltwater washdowns. The storage compartment in the cockpit sole turns into a fishbox with the addition of an optional macerator and overboard drain.

An optional console that's used as a wet bar or bait prep station can be placed against the cabin bulkhead. In it, you can place an optional ice-maker, a refrigerator, or both.

The 34's transom door is standard, but a swim platform is an option. All shore hookups are conveniently made from a weather-protected compartment at the center of the transom.

One other feature about the cockpit that you'll certainly appreciate is the flybridge overhang. On a rainy day, you won't get wet when heading topside from the cabin.

Silverton gives you a choice of four gasoline and diesel power packages on the new 34 Convertible, ranging from the twin 315 hp Yanmar diesels to twin 425 hp Crusader gasoline inboards.

Our test boat was powered by a pair of Crusader 5.7L multiport fuel injected gasoline inboards, the smallest blocks available. Despite their size, they moved the boat quite well, with an economical cruising speed of around 18 knots and a top-end speed of around 24 knots.

There was very little bow rise when accelerating from a full stop. Midrange throttle response was strong.

The day we tested, conditions were quite sloppy. Seas were worked up with three to four foot troughs.

I had expected some rolling motion on the flybridge, but it wasn't uncomfortable. The 34 Convertible proved to be a stable platform in those less-than-ideal conditions.

That solid performance shouldn't be surprising, of course. While the 34 Convertible may be a brand-new boat, it benefits greatly from its predecessor, having been well-tested over a long eighteen-year run.



Thirsty? No problem – cold drinks are at hand, thanks to the optional cockpit refrigerator.



The classic lines of the flybridge helm are enhanced by the beautiful Faria gauges.



Handling ground tackle is a snap with the optional windlass, and the anchor well is roomy and deep.





SPECIFICATIONS

Length Overall	37' 7"	11.46 m
Beam	13' 10"	4.22 m
Draft	3' 3"	.99 m
Approximate Weight (dry)	18,550 lbs	8,414 kg
Fuel Capacity	286 gals	1,083 L
Water Capacity	94 gals	356 L
Waste Capacity	37 gals	140 L
Headroom	6'6"	1.98 m
Sleeping Capacity		6
Clearance Height-DWL (No light)	12'7"	3.84 m
Deadrise		12.5°

Power Options – Gas:

Twin Crusader 5.7 L	330 HP	246 KW
Twin Crusader 6.0 L	375 HP	280 KW
Twin Crusader 8.1 L	385 HP	287 KW
Twin Crusader 8.1 L	425 HP	317 KW

Power Options – Diesel:

Twin Yanmar	315 HP	235 KW
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STANDARD EQUIPMENT

AM/FM Salon Stereo/CD w/speakers; AM/FM Flybridge Stereo/CD w/speakers; Telephone and Cable TV Jacks; Corian® Counters Throughout; Full Size Refrigerator/Freezer; Amtico® Galley Flooring

OPTIONAL EQUIPMENT

20" Flat Panel Salon TV; 2-Zone Air Conditioning; VacuFlush MSD; Sea Key® system

COMPANY HISTORY

Headquartered in Millville, NJ, Silverton is one of the leading builders of aft-cabin family cruisers. Innovations such as the SideWalk, a molded stairway on the side of the flybridges, and newly designed interiors have brought the company into the new millennium with style and elegance without losing sight of value. The company employs over 450 people, and has been in business for over 36 years.



Intelligent design abounds in the Silverton 34 Convertible, whether you are sitting in the optional convertible lower helm/dinette seat or relaxing on the flybridge.



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