

# CFN Shakedown Cruise: Calvin Beal 44

by **Brian Robbins**

Welcome to another CFN Shakedown Cruise.

Periodically, we will focus on a new launch and dig a little deeper into what went into the project – whether it be a new model or a hull well known to the New England commercial market. What we hope to do is provide insight and information our readers can apply to their own setups ... and, as always, offer up a little entertainment along the way.

—Editor

CUSHING, ME – The thing is, Travis Aiken liked his old boat just fine.

The 38-footer he'd lobstered out of for the last five years was comfy and handled well; he'd had good luck with the 550 John Deere that powered her ... he really had no complaints.

Except he needed more room.

Fishing further offshore meant rigging trawls – and a 20-trap trawl on his 38-footer was “pretty cramped,” says Travis. Besides more working room above deck, Travis was looking for more carrying capacity below –

and a rope tank, as well.

And even though his 38 had a split wheelhouse, some extra space would make life easier.

All in all, Travis was ready for a bigger boat. “I'm 32 years old,” says Travis. “I figured if I was going to do it, I'd better do it now.”

Travis' model of choice for making the big leap was the Calvin Beal 44 from SW Boatworks in Lamoine, ME.

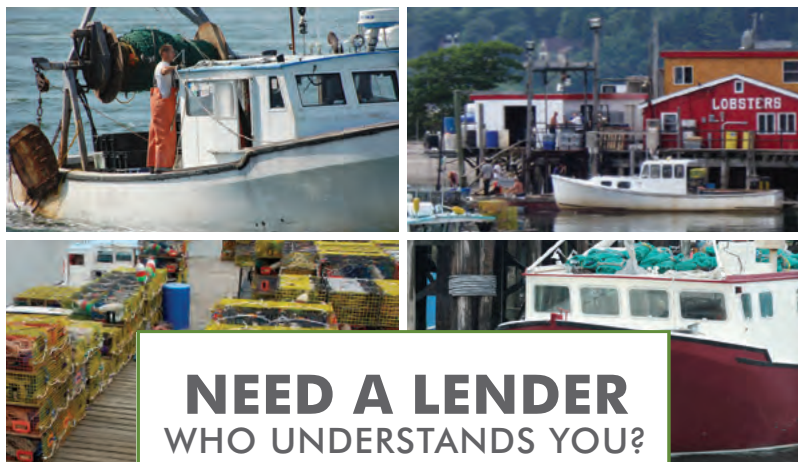
“I'd heard good things about them and liked the looks of the ones I'd seen,” he says. “I thought a 44 and a 750 Deere would be a good package.”

See SHAKEDOWN, page 10

**shakedown  
cruise**



Brian Robbins photo



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## Shakedown cruise Continued from page 8

"Had you been aboard a 44 Calvin?" I ask.

"Nope," says Travis with a grin. "Not until I launched this one," he says, patting the bulkhead of his new Sweet Victory.

Fair enough.

Let's get to know her a little better.

### "I almost gave up on it"

If you've never heard the backstory of the Calvin Beal 44, it's an interesting one. The fact is, one of the most popular lobster boat hulls of the last decade or so almost faded away before it had a chance to be.

In 2006 designer/builder Calvin Beal Jr. of Beals Island, ME began the strip-planked plug for what was to be the largest model in his self-named line of hulls: the Calvin Beal 44.

"I wanted to have a design out there that wouldn't be outdated in a few years," Calvin says.

"The demand was for bigger and bigger boats."

Which it was ... until the bottom fell out of the boat market later that year. "At that point, I almost gave up on the 44 plug," says Calvin, shaking his head. "But my wife Jeannine told me to keep going. I finally figured, 'I've started it; I might as well finish it.'"

The result was a 44-footer with a beam of 17'6", holding its width aft to a 16'2" transom.

The problem was, there just wasn't much of a market for anything – no matter what its

dimensions were.

Enter Stewart Workman of SW Boatworks, who at that time was a finisher of whatever hull his customers came to him with. Stewart told Calvin he was interested in having some molds of his own.

"My wife Alice and I had talked about it," says Stewart. "The economy had gone to hell in a handbasket and boat building had gone with it. But we believed it was going to come back; and we figured if I didn't have my own line of boats to sell, I was going to be out of business."

Along with the Calvin Beal models, SW also picked up the Young Brothers' molds

when the Corea, ME-based operation closed its doors.

Stewart now admits to being "scared shitless" at the time ... but whether you think of him as a clever businessman or a bold gambler, SW Boatworks had some boats to build once the economy began to rebound ... and the Calvin 44 became a popular model.

For Calvin Beal himself, SW's acquisition of his molds was a source of relief after years of

challenging long-distance relationships with layup shops and worry about market fluctuations.



Brian Robbins photo

Sweet Victory owner Travis Aiken.



Brian Robbins photo

### THE BOAT

LOA: 44'

Beam: 17'6"

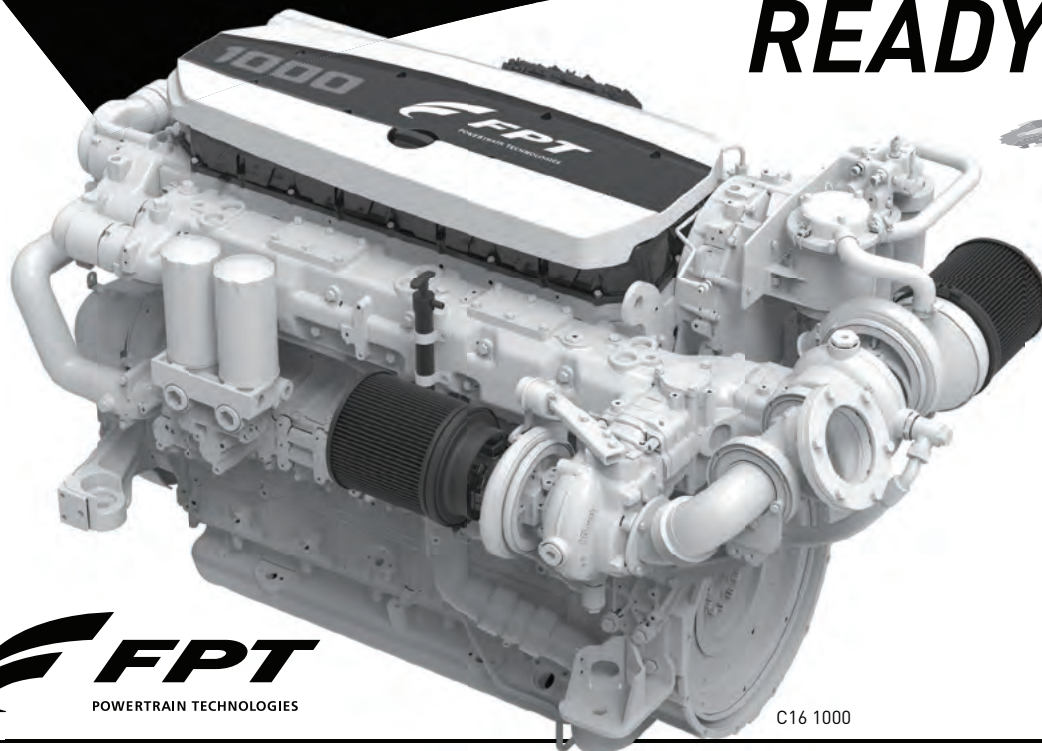
Transom: 16'2"

Designer: Calvin Beal Jr.

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"I couldn't have found anyone better to be building boats with my name on them," he says.

### Building a Victory

Travis elected to have his Calvin 44 hull and molded top stay with SW Boatworks to be finished.

"I'd seen pictures of boats SW had finished and it seemed like they did really nice work," says Travis. "They were good to talk with right from the beginning – and they did a good job throughout the process."

In particular, Travis mentions the efforts of shop manager Will Duffy along with Mason Burkowski, who was the team leader for the Sweet Victory project: "Will was my go-to guy and he made sure everything was the way I wanted it to be – he's a very talented guy. So's Mason ...

everybody there takes pride in what they do."

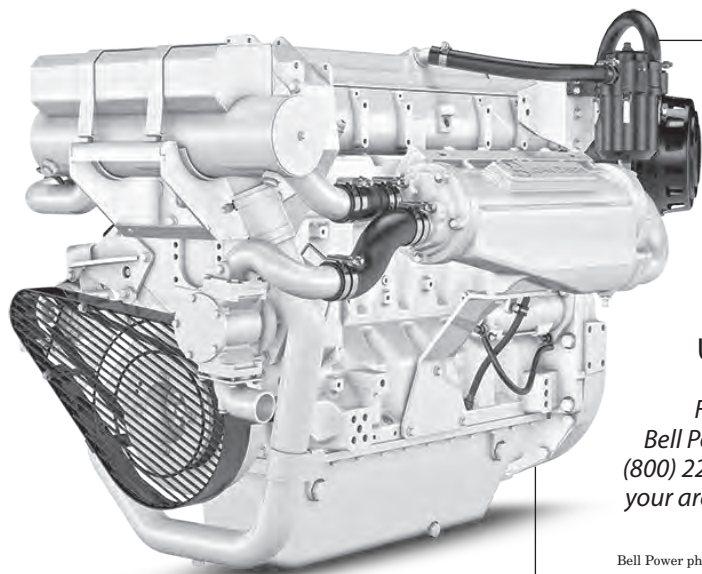
SW did some customizing to Sweet Victory's molded top: the main bulkhead and windshield were moved ahead 20", while 4" was added to the height of the wheelhouse.

As mentioned, Travis had his mind made up on a John Deere for his new 44-footer (he'd owned two previously). Art's Marine Service provided the power package: a 6135SFM85 Deere (rated 750 hp @ 2250 rpm) paired up with a 2.48:1 ZF 360A gear. "Art's mechanic Jason Gallant does all my work and takes really good care of me," says



Brian Robbins photo

SW raised the overhead of the 44-footer's wheelhouse by 4".



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Travis. "They're good people to deal with."

R.E. Thomas Marine Hardware supplied Sweet Victory's 2-1/2" driveline and underwater hardware; on the back end of things resides a 34"x42" 4-bladed prop from Nautilus Marine.

A pair of fuel tanks with a total capacity of around 550 gallons straddle the lazarette; ahead of those are three circulating lobster tanks running athwartships with a total capacity of 24 crates. A Bomar hatch sits over the lazarette; three bronze deck plates from R.E. Thomas provide access to the fills for the fuel tanks and the wet exhaust system; and Esposito's Welding (who handled all metal fab chores) built the custom hatches for the lobster tanks.

Sweet Victory's hauler came from Marine Hydraulics Engineering Co. Inc.; all the other hydraulic components were furnished by Lonnie's Hydraulics.

The 44-footer's electronics were supplied by Kramp Electronics.

Travis opted for mitered-corner windows. "I really like the looks of the old school-style windows," he says. Bomar furnished the custom aluminum-framed window set and sliding wheelhouse door.

As Sweet Victory came together to Travis'

See SHAKEDOWN, next page

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# Shakedown

*Continued from previous page*

specs, it was obvious she wasn't going to be a lightweight – but that's just exactly what he wanted.

"My 38 was heavy, and I liked the feel of it," says Travis. "Speed's good, but being able to work in the harder weather and be comfortable is what it's all about to me."

## "I'm pretty happy"

As solidly-built as she is, Travis says he was impressed with Sweet Victory's performance numbers when she hit the water in mid-October.

He reports a top speed of 23 knots; bringing the throttle back to about 1650 rpm yields a 15-knot cruise with a fuel burn between 20 and 21 gallons per hour. "That's about the same as my old 38 – and I've got a lot more boat here. I'm pretty happy with that."

Despite her broad-beamed dimensions, the 44-footer is a nimble boat, says Travis. "She turns really well – it's a nice-handling hull for its size."

A pair of Lenco Marine double-ram trim tabs are mounted on Sweet Victory's transom; so far, Travis says he's only used them running home with the lobster tanks flooded. "She actually holds herself up well even with the extra weight," he says.

With a few typical fall fishing days under his belt, Travis reported the 44 Calvin to be a comfy sea boat. "We were still hauling the other evening as it was coming dark and we had a 25 to 30-knot breeze. She felt really

*See SHAKEDOWN, page 14*

## THE DESIGNER

Calvin Beal Jr. is, without a doubt, the most prolific of the Beals Island, ME designer/builders. He'd built around 30 wooden boats before getting into creating hulls for fiberglass builders almost 40 years ago. Since then, the list of shops offering Calvin Beal designs have included T. Jason Boats, Crowley Boat, Mitchell Cove, Wayne Beal, South Shore, and General Marine – along with the model line bearing his name now sold by SW Boatworks. Calvin's childhood days were spent either floating homemade wooden toy boats along the shores of Moosabec Reach or "running around the boat shops." He probably spent the most time in Clinton Beal's shop, where the late Ernest Libby worked as a young man. (Ernest, who was married to Calvin's sister Myrtle, passed away in 2012.) With eight years between them, Ernest (or "Nernie" as Calvin refers to him) was older enough to be an inspiration to Calvin: "I'd never seen anything like Nernie," said Calvin. "He kind of took me under his wing when I was a kid – he even made me my first play boat. I guess you could say Nernie had it in him – he was meant to be a boat builder." Calvin "had it in him" as well. He absorbed ideas from the masters around him and joined their ranks, applying his talents to wooden boats before eventually making the foray into fiberglass designs. "I just started doing it and figuring it out as I went," says Calvin. "When I started a design, I'd draw a side profile first, then start cutting and whittling on my half-model until I got the shape that I wanted." When asked about the legacy of his designs, Calvin laughs. "I don't know ... I guess I'd like to think that years from now somebody will still be building boats with my name on them. That's the thing about fiberglass: they'll be around long after I'm gone."



Brian Robbins photos



So, what does Calvin Beal, above, fish out of when he's tending his lobster gear? A Calvin Beal design, of course. Calvin's current Jeannine Marie (his boats have been named for his wife Jeannine, whether it said Jeannine Marie, Jeannine M, or Little Girl on the stern) is 30'x12'.

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# Shakedown Continued from page 12

good; really comfortable ... that's where the extra weight helps."

Travis and his crew have hauled between 500 and 600 traps a day when they've been out so far; he says they haven't tried hayracking Sweet Victory with a load of 54" traps yet, however.

"We'll see what she'll take when the time comes," he says.

While Sweet Victory seems to be just what Travis was looking for to be fishing offshore, her handling abilities and good visibility speak well for working up inside.

"I know we'll get a taste of it next year when the pogies show up again," he says, pointing to a seine on the dock. "You put your time in and you can cut costs on bait ... it's worth it. We had fish right here in the harbor at one point."

And if the lobsters are hanging in close?

"I have a propeller cage already made up," says Travis.

"I'm not going to put it on unless I have to ... but if I ever need it, it's there." ■



Brian Robbins photos

Travis says having a rope locker at the hauling station, left, "is the way to go. On my old boat, I had to stand on top of the rope when we were hauling trawls." Sweet Victory's sailing attitude, above, makes for good visibility at either steering station.

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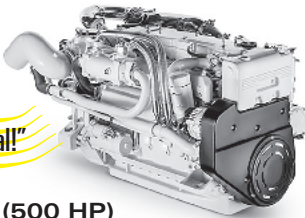


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