

REPORT ON THE RHODES CONTINENTAL

AS AN ENGINEER who drifted into sailboat sales in the early seventies,
AND AS A DEALER for most of the trailerable cabin sailboats in the 22'
range.

AND AS A FAMILY-OF-5-SAILOR who has trailed and cruised this kind
of sailboat in bays, rivers and lakes all over the U. S. A. -

I probably have a good idea of what the seeker of a family trailerable cabin
sloop wants and should look for.

We handled Ventures, Kells, Windrose, Catalina, South Coast, etc. and can
make some interesting comparisons with the 22' RHODES CONTINENTAL.
So, if you are a serious looker, the 13 minutes it takes to read this report
will turn you into an instant, minor sailboat buyer genius.

TRAILERABLE CRUISING SAILBOATS in the 22' size are easy to trail.
They vary in ease of launching and retrieving, ease and safety of raising
the mast or lowering the keel, in use of space, in sailing performance,
in features and, in appeal. This report covers these 7 variences.

RAISING THE MAST has been made easy on trailerable boats because the
base of the mast slips into some sort of hinge system. But in some boat de-
signs the mast is not positively bolted to the hinge or has to be held at an angle
to clear the hatch to fit the hinged step. The experience of a mast flying free
while trying to raise it, makes me appreciate the positive bolted system(that
starts at rest)of the RC. Many boats do not have the shrouds positioned to
prevent the mast from falling sideways while moving thru the raising arc. And
invariably the mast can only be raised forward by standing in the cockpit to get
leverage while sacrificing height, or standing on the cabin roof to get height
while sacrificing leverage.

But what if the mast were raised backwards and the upper shrouds were in
line with the pivoting base of the mast? Then you could stand on the fore-
deck(higher than the cockpit) and at the bow (more leverage than on the cabin
roof) and one person could handle it with continuous sideways support from
the shrouds. If the doctor says not to exert yourself even this much, then,
with the boom attached to the mast, the halyard to the end of the boom, and
the main sheet in its normal configuration, you have a built-in mechanical
advantage hoist that will let you delegate mast raising to almost anyone.

This is how the RHODES 22 does it. The backward approach is made possible
by an extra set of lower shrouds that fasten forward of the mast. Stability is
provided by upper shrouds to chain plates in line with the mast's pivoting plane.

Few other makes have double lowers so their masts can not be raised aft.
The few brands that do have double lowers fail to offer a hinge that allows
backward raising.

So, if ease of mast raising is important to you because of low bridges, dry
sailing, vacation trailering or a light weight crew, the Rhodes Continental
mast system makes this a boat to look into further.

LOWERING THE KEEL has been solved in one of 3 ways on today's trailerables:

1. Make the keel fixed so you do not have to lower it. But then neither can you raise it. OK. Then why not make the fixed keel shallow so the boat can still be considered trailerable? And why not build the keel fat and hollow so it has room to step down into it to get cabin headroom?

The facts of sailboat design just do not support this solution. First, if the depth of the keel is decreased, then the length must be increased in order that the total area can remain the same. But look at these type keels. Their sides are flat instead of having the continuous curve they should have to provide proper "lift". In addition, a long, shallow shape hinders maneuverability. Second, the efficiency of a fin, like a sail, is proportionate to the length of its leading edge. So beware. The shallow keels used in many of the trailerables, are less efficient, ie. do not go to windward as well as deeper fins would. Also, should you run aground, there is no way to raise the keel and sail off.

2. Make the keel pivot so it can have a long leading edge when vertical and swing up for shallow waters and trailers. A great idea, but a tricky mechanical feat, as owners of these swing-keel boats are experiencing.

A big 500 to 700 pound swing keel or centerboard must be supported by a single pivot pin in the boat's hull; hoisted by a cable and controlled by a winch. The system must not break or wear rapidly or leak. In real life pins can develop leaks, a single strand of the heavy cable frays and unravels fouling the cable, the winch rusts in the moist air.

If the winch is conveniently located in the cockpit, it takes up seating space. If it is in the cabin entrance, it becomes an obstacle. If the big handle is removable, it is an inconvenience when you need to pull up the keel in a hurry. If a lowering keel causes a run-a-way winch handle, fingers have been known to break.

Now for the objections! If the cable breaks, a falling keel can damage the hull. Even if no damage is done, there you sit with a 600 pound pendulum protruding from your boat's bottom. Try pulling it onto a trailer. If the cable does not break, it wears out a wear pin that is fun to change. The cable is great for catching seaweed, humming tunes or drumming up turbulence.

If you purchase a swing keel boat because you want to sail in shallow waters, you will be disappointed. While they sail better than the shallow, fixed keel variety when their keel is down, they sail poorly or not at all when their keel is up because the shape is wrong in the up position. Also the mechanism and often a keel trunk break up the interior or create floor interruptions.

A final objection: Swing keels are usually cast iron and cast iron rusts. Cast iron is also difficult to cast into sharp shapes . . . so system #3.

3. Combine a fixed keel with a swing keel (centerboard) as in the Rhodes 22. Now you have a boat that really sails in shallow waters because its keel is properly shaped for lift and balance in the up position. Lower a centerboard from the inside of this keel and you increase the length of the fin's leading edge for even better pointing ability. Retract the board into its keel and wetted surface decreases for downwind racing.

With the combination keel/centerboard design, most of the ballast can be in the fixed keel. This has the great advantage of allowing the swinging part of the fin to weigh less than 100 pounds. Pivot construction and crew control is infinitely more practical.

Instead of having to move tremendous weights with a big winch and handle, a small cam cleat is ideally located in the cockpit, taking no space at all. Instead of a stiff cable, you handle a soft, blue, braided dacron line. Instead of a wear pin, the blue line goes thru a 4 to 1 ratio of in-keel sheaves.

Advantages: Anyone, including children, can drop or raise the board in a flash with absolutely no way of damaging boat or operator.

Performance is better and quieter. With no long cable running from the bottom of the boat to the end of the keel, cable drag is eliminated. And a variable fin area allows adjustment to the boat's speed and direction.

Since the centerboard retracts into the keel, there is no hump inside the cabin.

Should you hit bottom under way, the centerboard harmlessly bounces up. The board acts as a depth finder! You can relax and do more gunkholing and exploring, less charting and narrow channel tacking. I have even used the board as a break, dropping it at the proper moment to make a perfect stop in a shallow water slip.

Maintenance is minimum with fins of lead encased in fiberglass, instead of painted cast iron. Efficiency is high because molded keels allow closer adherence to the naval architects lines, and beautiful fairing into the hull.

Now for the really big advantage: You sail onto your trailer with the board down for perfect, automatic centering. (see UNI-MATIC trailer sheet)

You have but to try all 3 keel systems to readily appreciate all the advantages of the Rhodes Continental's combination keel/centerboard.

We have not discussed deep keel boats because we are considering a trailerable boat. But in case you are under the impression you are giving up some safety to get trailerability, let's see.

If a fixed keel boat runs aground it can be there long enough to break up. If the keel boat springs a leak, down it goes. To carry enough foam to support its heavy keel would leave no room for people - so none is used. The trailerable boats can be made to float. The RC's foam floatation is molded into its hull for the added advantage of extra strength. Others, like the Ventures use foam blocks. Catalinas offer floatation as an option. Some just ignore this safety opportunity. What about capsizing? The RC can not be capsized under sail and like most of today's trailerables, is self-righting. . So the modern trailerable boat is actually safer than its equivalent heavier keel boat.

THE USE OF SPACE or, "You left no room for my feet"

How big is a 22' boat? Designs with big bow overhangs, like the Clippers are misleading. It is the length at the water line that more accurately tells you about potential usable space (as well as potential speed). The Rhodes has a 20' L.W.L., very high for a 22 footer.

In planning the RC it was decided: Reserve more of the L.O.A. (length over all) than is usual for the cockpit. Re-think the conventional floor plan of other 22s to get more living room in a shorter cabin trunk. Keep the foredeck flat, big and comfortable.

The logic behind this division of the L.O.A. was that the traditional reasons for a small cockpit were no longer valid for the modern design and technology of a boat like the Rhodes Continental. The Rhodes should have room for 6 rears plus 12 feet! Space taken from the cabin could more than be made up with a better floor plan than the one used in every other 22. And as long as the bow deck was a necessity for grabbing moorings, why not also make it a luxury spot for kids, retired skippers and other pretty things, to sun on.

THE DECK: This was easy. The temptation to slope the cabin roof down to the bow, was avoided.

THE CABIN: Standing, sitting, sleeping, cooking, dining, living, plus a head and storage - to offer all this meant designing for double and even triple duty from the same unit of space.

Many of today's trailerable cabin sailboats are available with pop-tops (rising cabin roofs) - a great idea because it lets you put on your pants standing up, or sit out a rainy day by occasionally standing. But most of these pop-tops have pivoting arms that swing the roof toward the mast or into the cockpit. Shade and weather protection over the cabin decreases. Headroom is limited to one height and mostly to those under 6 feet. The roof is either up or down. Raising these roofs usually requires a strong head, neck and arms - not a job for female crew hands.

The Rhodes Continental variable height pop-top is something else. It can be raised just a few inches - a terrific idea for extra ventilation under sail or when battened down for the night. Or it can be raised all the way to 6'-5" to take in most of us. It is not displaced from the cabin opening as it raises on telescoping arms that automatically snap lock at full height. Perhaps best of all, anyone can take on this assignment.

While some boats like the Ensenada and Aquarius offer pop-tops, they do not have a sliding hatch. The pop-top must always be raised. The RC has a feather touch sliding hatch built in its pop-top for entry when the top is down. With a large, cantilevered peak, weatherproofing the doorway, the hatch alone is a work of design art.

People often ask, "How can the Rhodes have such a large cockpit compared to other 22s, and still have bigger bunks in the cabin, (the dinette converts to a double bunk 6'-7"), a bigger galley, and more head room (both meanings apply)? The answer came by moving the Head to the Galley side of the hull so that otherwise wasted hull space could do double duty as part of the dinette, and by the elimination of coffin-like quarter berths!

Just as real estate ads feature houses by the number of bedrooms, cruising sailboats rate themselves on how many they sleep. The 22s usually boast sleeping 5. Rather than jamming in 5, the Continental limits itself to 4 adults (or 2 adults and 3 children) in more generous bunks while leaving a substantially bigger area for the galley. Should you be blessed with a larger crew, a boom tent converts the cockpit to a great, standing headroom fully enclosed, second cabin with room to sleep a small army sideways (port to starboard) or 3 basketball players lengthwise.

The galleys in trailerable sloops are admittedly toys, either sliding out from someplace or mounted over something, or doubling as the entrance step. On the Rhodes the galley approaches being a real kitchen with standing counter height and standing headroom. There is 4 1/2 feet of continuous work counter with storage above and below. The ice chest has a vertical door and adjustable shelves. The 15 gallon water tank is filled from an outside deck terminal, the extra deep molded sink discharges thru the hull. Work space increases even more when the top half of the cabin door folds down to become a serve-thru bar or chart table - a nice dual use of a necessary boat part.

With better space utilization, the cabin does not have to steal room from the cockpit, as is done in the other 22s. So while I appreciate a cabin as a place to store gear (rather than lug it home after every sail), and as a place to go to the bathroom (my days of spanning the centerboard well, enclosed in a blanket, are over), or as a place to escape a sudden down-pour, I appreciate a good cockpit even more since here is where I spend most of my sailing (and loafing) time.

THE COCKPIT: It is magnificent. It's huge: 8' X 7 1/2'. It's comfortable: curved gunnels with nothing to cut into your thighs when you feel like hiking out. Seats are deep enough so your knees do not jam your chin and your back is comfortably supported.

The cockpit is self-bailing, but so are they all self-bailing. Except the Rhodes is self-bailing without sacrificing that good, old fashioned feature of open seats - space under the seats for quick access to stored items like life jackets, lines, fenders, etc. that you always need in a hurry, and for heels and toes that have nowhere to go in the bathtub design cockpits.

The Rhodes accomplishes this terrific feat by using a separate mold to make a cockpit floor liner that extends the full width of the boat, thus extending under the open seats to incorporate this space in the self-bailing area. In addition to the convenience of open storage, the lazaret provides locked storage so big, (6'), my two boys can fit in it . . . a sort of brig.

SAILING PERFORMANCE is the Naval Architects' forte . . . so who designed it ?

Many of today's trailerables were quickly created by building a cabin on an existing day sailer, or were designed by the manufacturer with ease of manufacturing more in mind than sailing performance. The Rhodes, of course, was designed by PHILIP L. RHODES.

While the RC was not designed for scheduled service to Europe, it was designed for maximum hull efficiency. People are continually amazed at how the Rhodes moves thru water under seemingly windless conditions. On one demonstration sail we scooted past an Ensign (a 22' racing class) and the flabbergasted skipper shouted "Where are you hiding your motor?". We could have been under motor without anyone knowing it because the Rhodes can be powered with a motor in a well completely hidden in the lazaret.

Good performance design may be hard for a new sailor to spot. Look at the shape of the rudder blade: Flat blades have no lift. Blunted blades build turbulence. A fiberglass blade is the only practical way to get the best shape. Look at the shape of the keel: A beveled bottom cuts end-plate effect. A sweeping entry and tapering trailing edge, offer less resistance thru the water. Keel sides curved like the top of an airplane wing are needed for proper lift to counter the force on the sail above. Look at the water line: A large boat, built for rough seas, has a big overhang at both ends of the water line to provide additional buoyancy as the hull buries in waves. But we are not considering this kind of boat. On small cruising boats, the water line should extend to the transom for sufficient cockpit buoyancy so a loaded cockpit does not sit with a low stern. Look at the mast: Stays should be positioned so you can adjust curves out of the mast, and so enough tension can be applied to the jib stay to keep the sails leading edge from sagging and so stays do not have to put excessive compression on mast or cabin. A masthead rig (jib stay to top of mast) with back stays and lower shrouds fore and aft of the mast base, are needed for all this. Finally, try the boat: Feel the balance of the helm, the comfort of the controls, the boat's maneuverability. (We sail our RC onto its trailer and into slips. One tank of gas lasts all season.)

The easiest way of insuring you are getting good design is to make sure your boat was designed by a good designer.

10 FEATURES AND PEEVES Almost every boat has some special feature to justify its being in the sales race in the first place. The RC has a combination of unique features and peeve corrections that more than justify its entry.

1. Cables that support retractable keels, hum like harp strings when set in vibration by the movement of water. One of the reasons for being attracted to sailing is the joy of quiet, the absence of vibration. This motor boat hum is a real drag in more ways than one. The RC has no hummm.

2. Deck space around the cabin is small enough. Yet this minimum space is blocked, either by diagonal shrouds or chain plates growing right in the middle of this foot path, turning it into an obstacle course.

On the Rhodes, the 2 lower shrouds (which of necessity are diagonal) fasten to the cabin roof so they do not cut across the side deck at all. The upper shrouds (which pass the cabin vertically) fasten to the hull at the gunnel. With this placement of shrouds there is no blocking of the walkway around the cabin. In fact the shrouds now act as handy, vertical life lines !

3. Try taking a walk around the deck (or cabin top) on some of the latest designed boats. There is barely enough flat deck for any but sea gull feet, with all the sloping cabin sides, fronts and tops. The Rhodes Continental's topside is relatively flat, walkable, sitable, liveable, and safe.

4. The RC cockpit floor is more than self-bailing, it is raised. Same for the cockpit seats. (In fact the seats have their own double drain system thru the transom.) You do not stand or sit in puddles and neither do your cushions. This feature allows me to store the cockpit cushions outside when we leave the boat. Just a lazy habit, but it works.

5. The trailer bow eye is standard and makes an ideal mooring or anchor cleat. The feature point here is that there are 2 more standard eyes on the transom. While you may not use them for water skiers too often, they are great for stern anchor lines off a beach, towing, lock rings for an out-board, or, in conjunction with the bow eye, hoisting the boat by crane.

6. The dinette table does not anchor to the side of the hull. It sits on a pedestal that allows it to be set either the narrow or wide way, to be pivoted for easier seating of the entire crew (up to 5) at one serving, or to be stowed away to convert the dining room to a living room. The table and stanchion move to a matching base in the cockpit for delightful outdoor dining. The table top lowers to fill in the "U" shaped dinette seats for the largest double bunk in the 22 field.

7. A boat owner I know, who always has to have garage sales, claims you can never have too much storage. If the RC does not have too much, at least it offers more: storage in the locked lazaret, quick access storage under the cockpit seats - use plastic laundry trays as drawers, they can't slide out because the cockpit floor is raised, yet they pull out quickly by lifting the front slightly, storage in the gunnels, storage under all dinette seating, storage in the upper galley cabinet, in the galley shelf, in the lower cabinet, in and around the ice chest, storage on the shelf in back of the head, on the 12' of shelving around the forward bunks, under the forward bunks, hanging storage in back of the head, even hanging clothes hammock storage on the pegboard storage walls.

8. Some boats offer none, or very limited, boom height adjustability. The boom on the RC can be raised to sail with the pop-top up. You can't imagine what a grand way this is to sail. The cabin is bigger, the cockpit is roomier, the crew cheerier and even visibility is better. You can sail standing up with never a duck for the 'coming-about' boom. In heavy weather, stiffness can be improved by lowering the boom to cabin height.

9. Although the Continental looks like a big boat for one person to handle (one owner was stopped by state police for pulling an oversized load until a ruler check proved it was only 8' X 22'), it is set up for very easy single handed sailing. You sit there, on the seats or gunnels, with this very gentle tiller in your hand (I like to sail standing, with the tiller between my legs and both hands free.) Nor do you ever enter a tug of war with the main sheet. This line comes thru a fiddler block with a built-in cam cleat that is always on your side. A flick of the line up or down locks or unlocks it. The angle of the cam cleat is adjustable to your flicking taste.

If you think the main sheet is easy, the jib sheets are even easier. You just lay these lines across the jib sheet clam cleats. When the wind and sail are ready, they apply a forward motion that automatically locks the line in its clam cleat. With no wrapping or hitching of the jib sheets, releasing a sheet is so easy, I won't mention it.

Add to this the R C's simplified keel control and the fabulous furling genoa option, and you become a 3-in-1 man or woman crew.

10. Carpeting on the floor certainly dresses up any boat, so manufacturers put it down, and if they don't, owners do. But stepping down onto a wet, smelly, rotting carpet negates all the charm. I have not found a boat yet that somehow does not get water into its cabin: from bolt leaks, condensation, or someone leaving the hatch ajar. The Rhodes 22 is one of the few boats in its class to have a sole (a raised floor over the boat's curved bottom). Not only does this provide a flat, and therefore comfortable walking surface, but the carpet is always dry. On many of the 22s the carpet and you are in contact with the curved bottom of the hull or hull liner, soaking up all the water that invariably finds its way to this low point. The flat, raised, second floor of the Rhodes, with its small, accessible bilge, is almost reason enough to place it on your under consideration list.

APPEAL (eye or sex) Aesthetically you are on your own. I like the slight reverse sheer (it allows a lower cabin profile), the reverse transom (it gives the feeling of motion), the flared hull (for the advantages covered below) and the multiple cabin windows (maybe because it makes the boat seem bigger from afar).

Let's take a look at the flare in the hull below the deck rub rail. This extra outer curve creates a compound curved side with several advantages. It greatly stiffens the hull. You may have noticed how the flat sides of some boats flex when you push against them. Then too, the flare creates a cantilevered topside so you have built-in hiking seats without leaving the cockpit.

The flare also makes for drier sailing by deflecting spray and waves that would normally break over a flat side. The Rhodes is the driest, by far, of any of the 22s.

And finally, this flare helps the boat bounce back from a heel. We proved it for ourselves under the most extreme conditions. We put 3 of our best men at the end of a line attached to the top of the mast so they would have enough leverage to haul the boat over until the boom and sail were in water. The extra buoyancy from the flared part of the hull displacing water, gave the boat such a righting lift that when one man let go, the other 2 were catapulted over the mast and never heard from again. (Not really. They quickly realized that 2 men could not hold her down and let go in time.)

But back to APPEAL. While a boat is not a home, (at least the sizes we are considering), it would be nice, if when we went below, we were offered the feeling of a miniature, warm, cozy apartment. But fiberglass boats are slick - if not warm creations on the outside, the molded side, the side the fishes see. The rough side of fiberglass, the inside, is difficult to make palatable, no matter how many colors the manufacturer flecks or webbs it with.

A few builders ignore this problem. Many solve it in one of two ways: a fiberglass liner, so the inside of the cabin has that same glossy, one color look of the outside; slightly sterile, cold and sort of monotonous - or with a custom-built interior, usually of wood and expensive.

The Rhodes Continental is a boat pledged to economy but not to ugliness. The best of both solutions are used to finish its interior. A beautifully designed, one piece glass head liner provides a bright, easy to clean, mold-proof ceiling, that adds insulation and stiffness to the decks above. Then an interesting blend of teak, ply, plastic, metal, carpet, even painted pegboard, make the rest of the interior one of the most appealing of any of the low cost cruising sailboats.

The RC is also available with an unfinished interior at a saving that allows you to do your own creative cabin floor plan and decorating.

After the technical considerations have been digested, perhaps the RC will complete the winning of your hand from some little thing: The judicious use of wood trim with wood plugs hiding the bolts (instead of riveted plastic trims). How she wears her red and green running lights (one on each side of the cabin instead of a single housing on the bow deck). Or maybe something as minor as the selection of truss and oval head bolts and screws (instead of bulky hex heads). Whatever it is, you will feel the boat's appeal without having to analyze it. One suggestion: View your finalists, and particularly the Continental, rigged and in the water, to savor the boat's appeal and the way others will see you and your RC.

SO, IF YOU ARE IN THE MARKET FOR A LOW PRICE, EASY TO TRAIL, EASY TO RIG, FAST, COMFORTABLE, ATTRACTIVE, WELL BUILT, AMERICAN MADE, FIBERGLASS SLOOP IN THE 21 to 24 FOOT RANGE, we can highly recommend the RHODES CONTINENTAL. For answers to specific questions or a demonstration sail, please write or call:

Stan Spitzer 1 Hayes Road Amity Harbor New York 11701 516 842 7216

TRAILERING

The Combination RC / Trailer Rig is so ingeniously designed, so loaded with exclusive features, and so easy for one person to sail or motor onto, that we cover it in a separate report.

If you have decided on owning a Rhodes Continental and have questions on which options would be appropriate for your needs, ask for our booklet, "A DISCUSSION OF OPTIONS".