



*SILVERHEELS II*

## FLEMING 75 PILOTHOUSE

STORY JAMIE WELCH PHOTOS JEROME KELAGOPIAN

TONY FLEMING HAS BEEN A BOAT BUILDER FOR OVER FOUR DECADES, SO HE IS WELL AWARE OF THE FACT THAT A YACHT PURCHASE REQUIRES A HUGE LEAP OF FAITH FOR THE BUYER. THAT'S WHY, AS A METICULOUS ENGINEER, HE SPENDS COUNTLESS HOURS TWEAKING THE BOATS HE BUILDS AT THE TUNG HWA SHIPYARD IN KAOHSIUNG, TAIWAN. HE'S EVEN BEEN KNOWN TO TEAR OUT AND REBUILD AN ENTIRE STAIRCASE THREE TIMES BEFORE BEING SATISFIED. "WE ESTABLISHED HIGH STANDARDS WHEN WE BUILT OUR FIRST 55' FLEMING 16 YEARS AGO," HE SAYS. "AND THROUGHOUT THE YEARS THE PEOPLE AT TUNG HWA HAVE BEEN VERY ACCOMMODATING."





The warm, satin-finished teak saloon

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leming's efforts have not been in vain. Repeat customer Bob Rohloff—who traded in his Fleming 55' for the new 75' *Silverheels II*—has learned to admire Fleming's attention to detail. In fact, there was one improvement Fleming made on the 75' that was etched forever in Rohloff's mind. "The generator boxes didn't keep the gensets completely silent," Rohloff remembers. "So Tony made custom, stainless-steel sound shields, which are quieter than the ones from the manufacturer."

The boxes are just one example of Fleming's efforts to dampen sound and vibration on *Silverheels II*. The semi-displacement hull,

for instance, is two-inch-thick solid fiberglass reinforced by a lattice of frames and stringers. The well-insulated engine room houses twin 1400-hp Caterpillar 3412s and twin 32kW Northern Lights generators. To keep vibration levels down, Fleming bolted Aquadrives thrust brackets to the steel-reinforced stringers. This decoupled the engines from the prop thrust and allowed Fleming to install softer engine mounts.

A deep keel, low center of gravity and 165,000-pounds of displacement make *Silverheels II* a relaxing boat to take to sea, as I discovered when Mike Rohloff, Bob's son and captain, maneuvered

**Outdoors and indoors: split-level hardtop flybridge, coziness in the saloon**



easily out of a tight slip, through a channel and out into six-foot ocean swells. Tight turns were smooth and stable and the pilot-house remained eerily quiet as she hit her 23-knot top speed and docking *Silverheels II* was easy thanks to a large aft-facing helm station on the boat deck.

The younger Rohloff, who earned his captain's license before the 75's launch, discovered the boat's true seaworthiness in a tropical storm off the Bahamian coast earlier this year. "We were in 15' quartering seas but the yacht was very steady," Mike said. "The boat did much better than the crew and I did."

Lori Rohloff, Mike's sister, helped design the traditional interior, which is in satin-finished teak. The effect is warm and timeless, and it features raised panel cabinets, black granite countertops, royal blue fabrics and Ultraleather upholstery.

The electronics and decor were installed at Burr Yacht Sales, the Fleming dealership in Edgewater, Maryland. In business for 33 years and selling Flemings since 1991, the Burrs have a reputation for befriending their clients. "Art Burr is actually my neighbor," Bob Rohloff said. "He would constantly show me digital pictures of the yacht while it was under construction and always told me I could change anything, any time, free of charge."



## TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

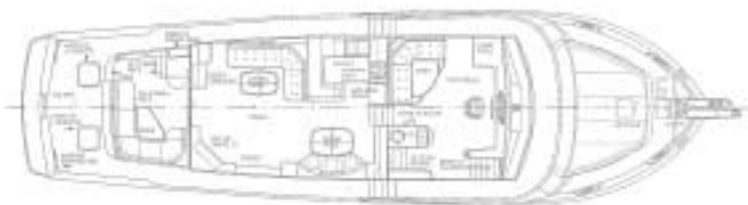
LOA:	75'
Beam:	21'5"
Draft:	5'3"
Displacement:	165,000 lbs.
Fuel:	3,000 gallons
Water:	500 gallons
Engines:	2x 1400 hp Caterpillar 3412s
Top Speed:	23 knots
Cruising Speed:	20 knots
Range at 10 knots:	2,000 NM



**Contacts:**

Fleming Yachts, 1314 West Bay Avenue, Newport Beach,  
CA 92661 Tel: 949-723-4225 Fax: 949-723-4093  
Web: flemingyachts.com Email: flemingy@pacbell.net

Burr Yacht Sales, 1106 Turkey Point Road,  
Edgewater, Maryland 21037  
Tel: 410-798-5900 Fax: 410-798-5911  
Web: burryachtsales.com Email: burryacht@aol.com



All Fleming yachts are quite customizable, but the custom features on *Silverheels II* are minimal. Bob Rohloff, a keen photographer, added a digital photography studio to his master suite and installed fishing rod holders in the teak cockpit. Mike Rohloff oversaw the installation of a simple electronics and navigation package in the pilothouse, which has a foldout Pullman berth.

Guest accommodations include a large ensuite VIP in the bow, a twin cabin and a day head. Crew quarters are aft of the engine room and are accessed by a portside door on the side deck. The crew area has its own head and can function as extra guest accommodations.

Exterior areas are functional and tasteful. The Portuguese bridge and California decks, connected by teak side decks, are safe and comfortable places for grandchildren to play. A helm station, settee, bar, electric grill, 14' tender, stainless davit and docking station are up on the sun and boat decks.

Fitted with Caterpillar 3412s, the Fleming 75 costs about \$3.4 million. Yes, paying that amount is certainly a leap of faith, but Tony Fleming has spent 40 years building safety nets for his buyers, and the yacht does come with a one-year, bow-to-stern warranty. ■

Tony Fleming on his 75'



## QUESTIONS WITH TONY FLEMING

### What's your background?

I started out with Grand Banks in 1961. Back in those days we didn't know exactly what we were doing and we learned on the job. They hired me because I had an engineering background and had worked in the aviation industry, which is a good starting point for an engineer because it's very unforgiving.

To me, a fine yacht must be a blend of art and engineering. One is no good without the other because, even with the best engineering, if the boat is ugly nobody will buy it. The truth is that, unlike a car or a house, for most people owning a boat is rarely a necessity. If you fall in love with a boat it is easy to justify the expense just as it is when you fall in love with a person.

### Tell us about your workforce at Fleming?

We've been working in the same yard, Tung Hwa Industrial Group, for 16 years and although most of our workers are contract laborers, they are just as interested in job stability as anybody else. Some of the people who build our boats have been building them for 16 years. My nephew Adi Shard works full-time at the yard, and one of our top engineers, Duncan Cowie, is at the yard every five weeks.

### How many Fleming 75s will you build annually?

We are making four a year, but that doesn't mean it takes ninety days to build one. It takes about seven months, but we will start one every ninety days.

### What is the competition for this yacht?

Most boats of this size come from Asia although there are several built in the U.S. in the Pacific Northwest. However, almost all of these boats differ from the Fleming styling and I don't think that anyone has the same attention to detail or classic looks, which characterize our boats.

### Do you have plans to build a bigger yacht?

We're not going to go up in size because it was a big jump going from the 55' to the 75' in terms of money and boat handling. Actually, the demand has been for something in between the two sizes, so we're developing a 65-footer. But we might go bigger some day because we're on the fringes of the superyacht market.