

One Very Tough Lady

"One of the many reasons I chose a Pacific Seacraft Flicka was the superior, heavy construction; but as good as she was, I knew that I could not expect her to survive this relentless beating"

Tom Messick

My teenage daughter, Mitzi, and I planned a weekend cruise aboard "Tondelayo," our Pacific Seacraft Flicka 20, to Egmont Key, an unspoiled island at the entrance of Tampa Bay and a favorite gathering place for weekend yachtsmen. The weather report of widely scattered showers was normal for this time of year so I was not particularly concerned with the small line squall on the horizon. As we neared the island I noticed that the storm was rapidly building so I turned and put a little more sea room between our boat and the land. We secured everything, set the storm anchor and went below to ride it out. Sudden storms with slashing winds, blinding rain and lightning are not uncommon in Tampa Bay which has the well earned distinction of being the 'Thunderstorm Capitol Of The World!' This particular storm looked unusually severe as sheets of rain obliterated the setting sun and the first wind gusts hit us broadside. Normally I check the anchor frequently in this situation but the lightning was so close and striking every few seconds that I considered it too dangerous to go on deck. The keel slammed on the bottom and we began a wild grinding slide sideways on the sand. It was agonizing to know that my boat was in trouble and all we dared do for the moment was to sit helplessly in the cabin.

The hull was being pounded on all sides as if by some giant unseen fist. Like most sailors a grounding is not anything new to me but when I was finally able to determine where we were in the fading light I realized that we were in very serious trouble. We had been swept past the south end of

Tom Messick and daughter, Mitzi, have enjoyed cruising in their Flicka, "Tondelayo," but this recent experience has proven their faith in Pacific Seacraft's superior heavy construction.



Tom Messick on "Tondelayo," his remarkable Pacific Seacraft Flicka Hull #20, sailing virtually undamaged after a pounding that would have destroyed most other boats.

the island into the Gulf Of Mexico and were being pushed by wind and current up the beach toward the ruins of an old fort. There awaited us huge jagged boulders the size of houses extending several hundred feet into the sea. I realized that this could quickly become a life threatening situation.

Finally we came to rest (hardly the appropriate word) in the surf several hundred yards from the fort. Our relief was short lived for then came the constant pounding on the bottom. At one time I thought we were going to roll and considered trying to get us ashore in the inflatable but the lightning was so intense that I reconsidered and we stayed with the boat.

High tide was nearly five hours away but I had little hope that we could hold together that long considering the brutal pounding we had to endure. I looked over the chart and came up with good and bad news. The bad news was that there were submerged pilings reported in the area plus a wreck. The good news was that we still had two feet of water under the keel according to the chart. We could hope that since it was wrong about that then maybe it was wrong about the other.

The hours passed slowly as the storm raged on, slamming the rudder and hammering the hull over and over against the hard bottom. One of the many reasons I chose a Pacific Seacraft Flicka was the superior heavy construction but as good as she was, I knew that I could not expect her to survive this relentless beating.

Finally the lightning abated and we went on deck to face a forty knot wind and driving rain. We were able in time to turn her bow from the beach. With

the winch and engine we slowly began to make some progress but we were paying an agonizing price as she would gain a foot and slam hard on the bottom again. In about an hour we finally came free. I had Mitzi to man the pump as I rushed to check the bilge expecting to find a flood of water to greet me. I could hardly believe my eyes as the bilge was bone dry. I checked the rudder and again, no apparent damage. We motored to the anchorage and dropped the hook well past midnight. At first light I checked for underwater damage and except for a scratched paint job found none.

I have to conclude that our Flicka is one very tough lady. "Tondelayo" brought us home safely from a nightmarish experience that would have left most boats in the surf with their backs broken and hulls split. Thanks again Pacific Seacraft for one hell of a fine boat. If you know of anyone who would like to buy a good used Flicka I congratulate them on their choice but it will never be MY Flicka, NEVER, NEVER, NEVER.

Specifications and further facts: LOA including bowsprit 24'0"; LOD 20'0"; LWL 18'2"; Beam 8'0"; Draft 3'3"; Cruising Displacement 5500 lbs.; Lead Ballast 1800 lbs.; Sail Area 250 sq. ft. For a descriptive brochure, send \$5 to:

Pacific Seacraft Corporation

Builders of Flicka 20, Dana 24, Orion 27, Pacific Seacraft 31, Crealock 34, and Crealock 37

3301 South Susan Street, Santa Ana, CA 92704
(714) 751-1343