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THE WAIT IS OVER

An experienced yachtsman knew exactly what he wanted, and

his patience was rewarded in the new **Sabre 54 Flybridge**.

BY MARY SOUTH PHOTOGRAPHY BY BILLY BLACK

I ADMIRE PEOPLE LIKE BILL SEALE —

those who know exactly what they want and refuse to compromise. Me, I'm too impatient. I should get a tattoo that says "Ehhh, close enough."

Of course, if we're talking about the difference between a Sabre 52 and a Sabre 54 Flybridge, no one gets the short end of the stick. But I respect that Bill Seale looked at the 52, loved it and still decided to walk away. He knew *exactly* what he wanted.

"We fell in love with the Sabre 52 before we bought our Grand Banks Europa 47, but we really wanted a flybridge," Seale said as we readied *Traveler*, his Sabre 54FB, for a run from Key Largo's Ocean Reef Club to the Miami International Boat Show. Seale's wife, Marguerite, is still a sailor at heart, and being able to enjoy

is the first boat Seale (see "An Owner Snapshot" on page 39) has ever had built. But he said it was a great experience.

"Everyone at Sabre is a dream to work with," Seale said. "You get to know everyone who's working on your boat."

"We had a bit of concern about the ladder to the flybridge," Seale confessed. "But they are the most delightful people to deal with, and Dave was fantastic." In fact, one of the details I noticed immediately was a window in the after bulkhead underneath the exterior stairs to the flybridge. While this simple rectangular window may occasionally give you the odd view of someone's feet ascending, most of the time what it's doing is adding to the light that positively floods the Sabre's salon. I loved it.



Traveler's salon is bright and elegant in its simplicity. And how about those views!

fresh air and sunshine under way was key, for both of them.

"I told Bentley Collins [Sabre's vice president of marketing and sales], if you ever build a flybridge model, I will buy one," said Seale. Enough people asked about adding a flybridge and Sabre listened.

"They're cautious people," he said of Sabre. "They didn't just jump in."

Dave Newcomb, who is the company's engineering department manager, first invested a lot of time and expertise in designing the new flybridge model, which extended the 52 hull by two feet. When Sabre was confident it had a design that would live up to its own high expectations, Collins let Seale know.

An experienced owner of both sailboats and powerboats, this

"It was their idea to do the window, letting the light in, but I have to admit I would have been disappointed if it was solid. To me, light is everything," Seale confessed.

If light is everything to Bill Seale, he chose the right boat. The cherry joinery in the lovely salon almost seems to glow from the effects of the outdoors coming in. Fans of the 52 will recognize this layout instantly, but why mess with a good thing? As you enter from the sliding glass doors to the cockpit, a U-shape dinette is tucked in the after port corner — the table drops to form an extra berth. To starboard is an entertainment console with a hidden flat-screen TV on a lift. The helm, forward and to starboard, has a Stidd seat, and the line of sight is excellent. Even better, a door beside the helm opens to the deck — a feature

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LOA: 58'0"
LWL: 49'3"
BEAM: 16'0"
DRAFT: 4'3"
DISPL.: 55,500 lb.
FUEL: 800 gal.
WATER: 200 gal.
ENGINES (STANDARD): 2 x
865 hp Cat C15 diesels
ENGINES TESTED: 2 x 700 hp
Volvo Penta IPS900 diesels
PRICE AS TESTED: \$1,800,000



Seale eliminated a helm seat and the barrel chair — the L-shape cabinet now runs in a line along the starboard side. The result is pleasingly open with good flow.

RPM	KNOTS	GPH	dB(A)
600	5.7	2.60	65
900	8.4	6.10	68
1200	10.1	14.00	68
1500	12.6	25.01	69
1800	17.5	37.00	69
2100	23.6	51.00	70
2400	30.1	68.00	70

TEST CONDITIONS:

Speeds were measured by GPS off Government Cut in Miami, Florida, in 44 feet of water with flat seas and 3.7-knot winds, with a full load of fuel, 1/3 load of water and four people on board. Fuel consumption was measured by the electronic engine-monitoring system. Sound levels, measured in the pilothouse, were supplied by Sabre.





Traveler's pretty downeast lines look good by day and by night, inside and out.

that adds extra reassurance when docking from the salon helm in lousy weather or when there's no help with the lines. A full array of electronics is set in the cherry dash, which sports a beautiful matching wheel. An integral chart table lifts up to reveal dash stowage beneath, and the AC/DC display hides behind cherry doors above. L-shape seating to port sits atop an ice maker and offers the skipper handy companionship.

A few steps down and you're in the galley, which runs along the port side with a small dogleg forward. Clean lines and top appliances, including Sub-Zero drawer refrigeration and freezer units, a Fisher & Paykel dishwasher, a three-burner ceramic stove top and loads of stowage make this galley elegant and functional. A washer/dryer is also tucked away opposite the end of the galley, behind a door and above the second Sub-Zero unit. Again, though, it is the light that really dazzles. Most of it pours down from the salon, but a window above the sink also gives the cook a bright view of the passing sights while under way.

Across from the galley is the amidships master, which can be completely opened to the galley or hidden behind two large, sliding shoji pocket doors. A full queen berth on a hydraulic lift hides stowage, and there are lots of thoughtful touches in the cabinetry — like a drop-down hamper with a mesh bag liner. The lockers are cedar-lined and auto-lit. A large hatch overhead opens for more air and light, and the en suite head features a ceramic tile sole and an ample shower with heavy glass door.

The forward stateroom has another queen, plenty of stowage, an opening overhead hatch and an en suite head with a circular door. An entrance from the companionway allows this to double as a day-head.

"We were involved with everything from the plans on," Seale told me as we headed back through the salon and up to the flybridge. "This is the only boat I've ever had built, and I loved certain stuff. ... For instance, Sabre made a full-size mock-up of the helm so we could play with the positioning of the



instruments until it was exactly what I wanted. And this seat" — he gestured to a spot beside the flybridge helm as he settled in — "is customized to be a recliner."

Once up top, it was easy to see why Seale had waited for a flybridge model. It was a warm, sunny February day. The water in the Keys was a flat, rich turquoise. As we flew up shallow Biscayne Bay with the wind in our hair and sun on our faces, we passed dolphins, frolicking languorously, and I wondered for about the billionth time why anyone with even half a brain lives in the Northeast in winter.

The flybridge area sported twin Stidd helm seating before a full electronics display and an L-shape settee and table aft. An electric grill and stainless-steel drinks refrigerator were convenient. Seale had opted for an after-market hardtop made by J&J Marine Services and an Iselin enclosure that was genius in its simplicity: It lifted and locked on to the overhead with no fuss at all.

The engine room, which is accessed from the cockpit with the

AN OWNER SNAPSHOT BILL SEALE

Sabre probably couldn't dream up a better buyer than William E. Seale, who divides his time between Annapolis, Maryland, and the Ocean Reef Club in Key Largo, Florida.

Now retired, Seale is an economist and was a partner at a mutual fund investment firm. He had also been chairman of the finance department and senior associate dean of the business school at George Washington University and was appointed by President Ronald Reagan as a commissioner of the U.S. Commodity Futures Trading Commission. So the man understands money and value.

But he also knows boats. As a teenager, his first was a 12-foot Chris-Craft with a 10-horsepower engine. Within two years he'd traded up to 16 feet with a 35-horsepower Evinrude. "I thought I had arrived," Seale said with a laugh. But of course, he was only just beginning.

Seale's current fleet, in addition to *Traveler*, consists of a Beneteau 49 sailboat and two Grady-White Canyon 306s. "I keep one in Annapolis and one in Ocean Reef, and I have them



both set up the exact same way, with twin Yamaha 300s. I find it makes it easier to move back and forth between them."

It's clear that *Traveler* has met Seale's high expectations. He and Marguerite are planning on heading to Key West and then to the Dry Tortugas before taking *Traveler* on a leisurely exploration of Narragansett Bay and on to Maine for the summer, where they'll no doubt stop in to say hi to their friends at Sabre.



Overhead hatches provide extra light and ventilation belowdecks. Sliding shoji screen doors open the entire wall between the master and galley.

push of a button that hydraulically lifts the sole, features a white gelcoat interior with a diamond plate sole, good lighting and excellent access to most service points. Seale had opted for twin Volvo Penta IPS 900 drives, which later held station as we waited for the Venetian Causeway to open on the half-hour. Under way I noted we were on plane at 1600 rpm and 17 knots. And the Sabre 54 with IPS handled beautifully, carving tight, effortless turns and running bone-dry even at high speeds. *Traveler* has Humphree trim tabs. "She runs well without them, but better with," Seale believes.

Another very noticeable plus: low noise. I had some problem setting the dampers on my decibel meter app and have relied on Sabre for its data, but the quiet running is something anyone who's been aboard will notice. In the salon, running 25 knots, the Sabre 54FB registers 74 decibels, which means normal conversation is entirely audible.

I asked Seale if he was pleased he'd made the leap to IPS drives, and he didn't hesitate. "They're really amazing and I wouldn't go back." He brought his considerable experience to bear on several other customizations to *Traveler*, some large and some small. There is absolutely no exterior teak on his Sabre 54FB — except for the flagstaff. He opted for a single Stidd chair at the salon helm and also went with straight-line cabinetry across from the dinette, instead of the standard L-shape. One of his favorite features on the Sabre 54 is the electrical system. "It is absolutely no fuss. I don't even have to think about it. It has a built-in decision-maker, and I just turn it on and go. It manages itself."

If you're looking for a downeast-style boat finished to the highest standards and equipped to make cruising a joy, your wait, like Bill Seale's, is over. □

Sabre, 207-655-3831; www.sabreyachts.com