



Small Sounder-model fireboat boasts big water capacity, speed

Photos and story by
Brian Gauvin

It does not take long to realize that firefighter and boat operator Sean Kearns is an ardent enthusiast when it comes to the Clark County Fire Department's spanking new fireboat, *Mary Firstenburg*. On a visit to the fire department's marine location on a slough off the Columbia River at Ridgefield, Wash., Kearns was delighted to show off the boat.

"I like everything on this boat right down to the switch for turning on the bilge pump," he said. "I see this boat in three dimensions." Kearns and Capt. Ryan Berg immersed themselves in the process throughout the design and building of the boat; Kearns assigned to the technical aspect and Berg the aesthetic treatments.

The boat is a 30-foot Sounder

model from North River Boats, a bustling operation in the unlikely inland location of Roseburg, Ore. Length from push bar on the bow to crash bar on the stern is 37 feet.

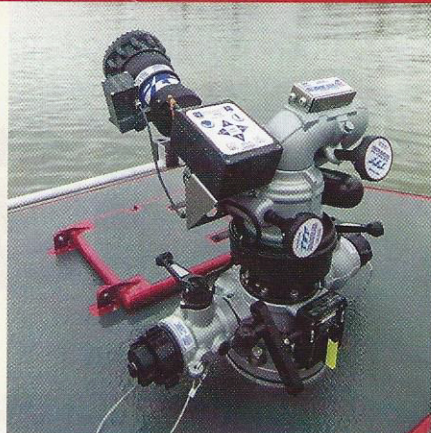
"One of the great features of the boat is the amount of water that it puts out," Kearns said. He and Capt. Clint Frahler were delighted to fire up the V8, 5.7-liter, Kodiak 350 marine engine for a water show on the back side of Sand Island on the Columbia River. The fire pump is piped to a Hale 1,500-gpm pump and Crossfire monitor on the stern, and a 1,250-gpm remotely operated Task Force Tips monitor on the bow. The curtain of water created an almost opaque veil in front of the St. Helens Marina near Columbia City on the Oregon side of the river.



Above, *Mary Firstenburg*, the new fire and rescue boat for Clark County in Washington state, is underway on the Columbia River. Left, Capt. Clint Frahler operates the stern monitor near Ridgefield, Wash.



Left, boat operator and firefighter Sean Kearns joins Frahler on the deck of *Mary Firstenburg* in its specially made boathouse. Right, the Task Force Tips bow monitor's capacity is 1,250 gpm. Below right, Kearns steers the 37-foot boat.



Kearns was very pleased that North River had exceeded his expectations for the amount of water the firefighting system produced. He emphasized that no single item can be identified as the best feature for the firefighters to accomplish their goals. "They all work together to allow us to do our jobs efficiently," he said.

Another key piece of equipment in the fireboat's arsenal is the FLIR M-61 stabilized thermal imaging camera, the single most expensive line item, according to Kearns. "We mainly use it for navigation, but it is also very important in locating bodies for surface recovery," he said.

Two 300-hp Yamaha V6 outboards propel the speedster at 40 knots full throttle, and 30 knots at cruising speed. The firemen will need that speed to cover a large area from Vancouver to Longview, Wash., on the Columbia River and the north fork of the Lewis River. The crew regularly practice trailering the boat, an exercise that is important in their additional emergency assist role.

Mary Firstenburg was funded by a port security grant from the Department of Homeland Security. The boat is named for the wife of Ed Firstenburg, an independent banker and philanthropist in Ridgefield. •



Above, a 1,500-gpm Hale pump and Crossfire monitor are mounted on the stern. Below, *Mary Firstenburg's* 5.7-liter Kodiak 350 Marine V8 fire pump is located below the stern deck.

