Fifty Ericson 41s were built between the years of 1967 and 1970. The design was eclipsed by the E-39 in 1972, and later by the E-38, both of which went on to earn their own loyal followers.

With the right sails, the robustly built Ericson 41 will still fare well in light winds.

HULL

The Ericson 41's well-executed, hand-laid, solid fiberglass hull is a key reason why the boat has endured for almost 40 years. The hull was laid up in the two halves of a split mold. While the resin was still "green," the two halves were brought together and several layers of mat and 24-ounce woven roving were laminated into the hull, locking both parts together, and creating a secure, one-piece ballast cavity without any keel bolts. The foil-shaped, longish fin keel was much more streamlined than similar structures found on the Bermuda 40, Rhodes Reliant, and Pearson 41, all built during the same era. This means of construction used extra layers of fiberglass to create stiffness rather that resorting to core material and a sandwich construction. The result was a tough hull with a solid inward turning deck flange. The thick—by modern standards—hull skin was further supported by a "stick built" interior in which all of the joinery work is tabbed to the inner hull surface, contributing to the stiffness of the boat. A sandwich hull would have been lighter, but much of its toughness and longevity likely would have been sacrificed, and since much of the weight is below the vessel's center of gravity, there's even less to complain about.

DECK

The deck was an early excursion into cored construction and not as rugged and free from maladies as the hull itself. Built in a female mold, the deck, coach roof, and cockpit were comprised of a composite that began with gelcoat molded with a good nonskid pattern, followed by an outer fiberglass skin, and a plywood core for side decks, and balsa core in the foredeck, coachroof, and aft deck areas. An inner skin of FRP completed the sandwiching of the core materials. Over the years, the encapsulated marine plywood has held up quite well, while the balsa core material has proven to be a headache for many owners. Most of the problems stemmed from the fasteners penetrating the core material and the voids resulting from the core bonding process. In many cases, handrail screw holes and hatch embossment fasteners have allowed fresh water into the myriad of slots in the balsa core, eventually rotting the material. Repair is a time-consuming DIY project, or a costly project, if done professionally. But the expenditure makes good financial sense if the boat is otherwise in good shape.

SPARS AND RIG

The Sparcraft double-spreader rig is made of T6061L alloy and the top section carefully tapered, ending in a simple but rugged dual sheave masthead box welded in place. The halyards are external, which allows ease of replacement at sea and the advantage of larger sheaves (up to three times the diameter of those used with in-mast halyards) that are much kinder to line or wire. Original wood spreaders are attached to welded mounts on the side of the spar. In moist climates the spreaders are prone to rot, and the simple, but flawed, mounting system requires watching. The 1x19 standing rigging is light for lengthy ocean passagemaking, and when re-rigging, increasing wire diameter by one size makes good sense. A few E-41's—mostly those with the tall rig option, and especially those that were raced hard—eventually developed chainplate problems in which the welded dowel-like gussets would shear from the stock and pull up, but not completely out, of the deck. Retrofit solutions range from bolt-on options to bonding in better welded structures.

RUDDER AND KEEL

Rudders failed aboard many of the early boats, and the problem was traced to a design change instituted by a subcontractor hired to build the rudders. Instead of welding a stainless steel framework for the rudder directly to the stainless steel rudder stock (which was meant to run deep into the rudder blade), the subcontractor cut off the stock at a point that was less than one foot into the rudder blade. A flat, mild steel plate was then welded to this shortened stock. Corrosion, along with poor design, led to critical rudder failures aboard boats en route to Hawaii and beyond. Just this one shortcut, aimed at saving a few dollars in stainless steel, tarnished the reputation of a very good sailboat, and reinforced cruisers' growing suspicions regarding spade rudders.