

A dinghy designed for small boats

The 6-foot carbon fiber and Kevlar dink weighs just 35 pounds

By Brooke Dow

While anchored in his 28-foot Catalina, Jan-Henrik Andersen found himself in need of provisions and without a means to get to shore. So he grabbed a waterproof bag and took to the water.

"I had to swim to shore to get groceries; I decided that wasn't a good idea," quips Andersen, who is in his late 40s and lives in Ann Arbor, Mich.

That sent Andersen searching for a dinghy small enough to fit on board a small to midsize cruiser. When he had no luck, Andersen went on a mission to create one.

right size to carry two adults. "I don't think there is anything this small or this light out there with a load capacity like this one," the designer says.

Andersen says he included 150 pounds of flotation, most of it in the bow and gunwales, so if the boat were to fill with water it wouldn't sink. The dinghy also is designed to handle less-than-ideal conditions, like increased wind or waves. Its bow section decreases spray, and the shielded area beneath the foredeck allows for dry storage.

Other features include a skid plate at the bow, rolling wheel at the skeg, fore-aft thwart, bottom handles and

including a 36-foot cruising sailboat that last year won an award from Blue Water Sailing Magazine. He says he spent around 150 hours designing and building his dinghy. He used 3D software known as Rhino-3 to test his little boat, so he was confident it would perform to his expectations.

Despite his experience, Andersen considers boat design a hobby. "It's the

most fun thing in the world to design boats and then sail them," he says.

Andersen hasn't yet had the time to try and sell his dinghy to a designer or manufacturer.

"If there was a positive response to it," he says, "I would be willing to produce it."

Andersen can be contacted at janbande@umich.edu. ■



Compact size and light weight were major considerations in the dinghy's design.



"The objective for the project was to design, build and test a dinghy that can be easily stored on deck, on the transom, in davits, or car-topped — and handled by one person," according to Andersen, an industrial design professor at the University of Michigan. "At the same time, I wanted a dinghy that is safe and seaworthy."

Andersen's 6-foot, 2-inch cruising dinghy is built of carbon fiber and Kevlar and weighs just 35 pounds. With its 4-foot beam and 500-pound load capacity, he says it's about the

skids, adjustable oarlocks, and inspection windows in the hull bottom. The inspection ports give boaters the ability to examine the primary boat's rudder or propeller without going in the water, says Andersen. Perhaps the most important feature is the dinghy's size, which Andersen says allows it to fit on boats as small as 25 feet. He says it can be hung from the transom, stored on deck or towed.

Andersen, who grew up sailing in Norway and moved to Michigan in 1996, has designed more than 10 boats,