

# Raiatea

## Hardtop Project

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This project was planned for Hearsay, my 35 tri-cabin. As with most of my projects, there is a very long time between concept and completion. (In 1984 I drove a 1967 230SL roadster. It blew a head gasket, so I decided I would just take it apart and restore the whole car. It still sits in my garage, having not been driven in almost 25 years.) Anyway, I have four children and a standard bimini just will not stand up to the monkey bar action of the children jumping out of the cockpit and running up the deck. Plus I like the solid top as mounting points for instruments and solar panels.

At the time of the original concept, I went to a local fabricator that makes numerous custom hardtops for the sport fishing industry. Making me a hardtop was no problem, a custom one would be about \$7,000.00, but if I could use one of the standard sizes, it would only be \$3,000.00 to \$5,000.00. Even if I wasn't so cheap, any of these numbers was way more than I was able or willing to pay.

So I went to plan B; the internet. On it I was able to find several marine salvage yards that sold fiberglass hardtops in various sizes. I found one the approximate size of the Allmand cockpit in Florida. I drove down and picked it up myself so that there would be no shipping charges and was able to buy the top for \$450.00. Since the top was for a power boat, the front was about 10 inches narrower than the rear. This worked well when I turned it around as the taper almost matched the taper of the cockpit exactly.

As I am prone to do, I then stored the top until I could find a welder to fabricate the frame posts. What are a few years when you are

having fun? My delay worked to my advantage as I recently purchased Raiatea, a pilot house 35. Therefore, Hearsay will be sold and the hardtop was put on Raiatea. The cockpit of the pilot house is shorter than that of the tri-cabin, so the top I purchased actually fit the pilot house better.

I went back to the original fabricator mentioned above and they were able to make the posts and backing pads for about \$500.00. I installed the top myself, which wasn't hard, except for the wire runs for the plotter. It took me a good afternoon for the installation.

Here are a few photos of the finished \$1,000.00 hardtop. I think this is about the same cost as a custom bimini without a dodger or side panels.



With the already high windage of the pilot house and the arch, I doubt the hardtop adds anymore than a standard bimini.

The look is not for everybody, especially if you are trying to make your Allmand look like a race boat. But it makes for a very comfortable cruiser, even if it does look like an RV with the pilot house, hardtop, and arch.

