



AN AMERICAN BOAT COMPANY:
GRADY-WHITE BOATS
SINCE 1959



Glen "Bud" Grady (l) and Don White (r)

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PRELUDE

Glen R. Grady and Don F. White were men of different backgrounds yet similar bent, whose lives became intertwined by interests, passion, and happenstance.

Grady was a man of the North Woods, a Wisconsin native whose frames of reference were the conifers that fringed Green Bay, an arm of Lake Michigan, where rocky shoals crept outward from the shore, and the howling-gales of November that flayed the graygreen waters.

White, by contrast, was a child of privilege, adopted by a well-to-do farmer and his wife in Vanceboro, North Carolina, where the rolling hills of the piedmont flatten out into the lush, watery landscape of the state's eastern counties, where forests of pine and oak push to the edge of shallow sounds and bays—and where November's blasts also played a major role.

Both men loved boats. And both, as a result of their surroundings, recognized the need for strong, seaworthy craft.

Glen Grady, also known as “Bud,” became a professional boat builder early-on. He apprenticed first to a local boat manufacturer, Thompson Brothers Boat Manufacturing Company in Peshtigo, Wisconsin. The Thompsons were already a famous family concern. Their ancestors had come from Denmark in the late 19th Century, and in 1904 Peter Thompson and four of his brothers started building boats in their parents' barn.

He was already a leg up on most boat builders, having worked first at the Racine Boat Works and then with the legendary Chris Smith (Chris-Craft). By the time Glen Grady was employed, in 1948, the Thompson clan had plants in Peshtigo and Cortland, New York, and an international reputation.

Five years later, in 1953, he moved over to the Thompson's new company, Cruisers, Inc., of Oconto. At both companies, Grady started pretty much at the bottom of the corporate



Bandleader and celebrity Guy Lombardo and his brother Lebert check out the quality of Grady and White's boats on a visit to Greenville in 1961.



Grady and White discuss the boat business and the growth of their company with local TV newsmen Sherman Husted and W. E. Dednam on Greenville, NC, station WNCT-TV Channel 9 in the early 1960s.

ladder and worked his way up from laborer to foreman of the painting gang at Cruisers.

Ray L. Thompson, the company's president, recognized his talent and energy and promoted him to sales manager.

Thompson and Cruisers were then building wooden lapstrake, or clinker-built, boats that were solidly made in the tradition of the Scandinavian craftsmen whose families had settled along the ice-rimmed lakes. They were lovely hulls, aesthetically pleasing in line and form. From a practical



standpoint, they were also ideally suited for the capricious weather, the sometimes violent storms that plague the Great Lakes.

Don White, meanwhile, took a slightly different route. After graduating from Vanceboro High School, he attended both East Carolina University and the University of Florida. For a decade, he owned a hardware store in Vanceboro before moving the business 19 miles northwest on Highway 43 to Greenville. An entrepreneur at heart, he eventually owned several automobile dealerships, dabbled in real estate development (he built the Holiday Inn in Greenville) and became a boat dealer.

Don's boating environment included the often turbulent seas off the North Carolina capes where the southbound Labrador Current and the northbound Gulf Stream carom off of each other, creating hellish rips and unforgiving inlets—not to mention some of the finest fishing in the world. The inshore waters were no picnic, either. Wide, shallow Pamlico Sound can kick up into a miserable, dangerous chop when the nor'easters blow. The weather and the sea conditions were the crucible in which Outer Banks boat builders divined and refined their craft.

Don became the distributor for Cruisers in North and South Carolina and Virginia, and

MODEL 174

17¹/₂'

Hatteras
DELUXE



Grady and White shipped the first four boats, 17-foot Hatterases, in February 1960.

met Glen Grady through that connection. In 1958, the two men formed a partnership, incorporating as G&W Boats, Inc., with Don White as president. Vice President Glen Grady, of course, provided the boat-manufacturing know-how. It was a family affair: Glen's wife, Corinne, was secretary, and Don's wife, Enid, was treasurer.

G&W, shortly to become Grady-White Boats, began its business life in the old Star Warehouse No. 2, a former tobacco storage facility on Albemarle Avenue in Greenville. It was in an area of single-story houses, taverns, one movie theater that later became a church, and dogs patrolling yards blown with trash. If the surroundings were less than favorable, the wooden boats they began to produce were not merely promising, but among the best in the nation.

Glen Grady moved down from Oconto with his family, bringing with him Ronald Peterson as a designer and engineer. Peterson, too, was an alumnus of Cruisers. Favoring the boats they knew best, Glen and Ronald designed a series of very handsome "works of art." Their lapstrake sides, crafted of steam-bent white oak frames and planking, lifted into gently flared bows. Thousands of brass screws and bolts held them tightly together. They were beautiful. They were

functional. They quickly garnered a following, especially in the Northeast. One of their hires was an energetic boat salesman from Gloucester, Massachusetts, named Bing Fishman. Forty years later, Fishman's energy is unabated and his contributions to the company ongoing.

Initially, Grady-White produced two models: a good-looking 16-foot runabout called the *Pamlico*, and a similar 17-footer known as the *Hatteras*, a boat whose name perhaps foretold the saltwater, coastal emphasis the company took on many years later. The first four boats, 17-footers, were shipped from the plant on Friday, February 26, 1960. Two were sent to Chicago and two to St. Louis. Another pair was sent the next day to New Jersey. Grady and White were now employing 38 people and announced ambitious plans to produce 1,000 boats in that year, including 20-foot offshore models to be added to the line in April.



1964 publicity stunt "Skiing to the World's Fair"

The *Pamlico* was a classical clinker-built runabout with a comely tumblehome and a fairly large “mahogany frame two-piece windshield complete with automotive type shatter-proof safety glass,” and deck and hull hardware that included stern lifting eyes that doubled as ski tow rings. Options included canvas or vinyl cockpit covers, back-to-back seats and a full width rear seat—among many others.

The larger *Hatteras* featured what the catalog called a *Flying Bridge*—in truth, a modest step up—and a cuddy cabin with bunk cushions that could be gussied up with a sliding door.

The 20-footer was named *Atlantic* and was offered both as an open runabout and cuddy model, with twin outboards or an inboard/outboard (I/O). These (and the *Hatteras* models) could be ordered with cockpit covers or camper tops. There was considerable flare built into the

bows, a sop to the larger commercial hulls that prowled the edges of the Atlantic Ocean.

All offered cockpit draining and a fairly extensive list of options. At retail, the boats were priced from \$695 to \$1,600, depending on size and equipment.

The “Clinkerbuilt that Challenge Comparison,” as their advertising slogan declared, resonated with boaters and anglers. By 1965, they were building 13 different models. A mid-1960s price list offered five inboard models as well, up to 33 feet. The 3300 *Caribbean Custom Cruiser*, with twin Gray Marine 220 hp engines, priced out at \$16,450.

Utile mahogany plywood was touted as the material of choice. In a letter to a customer in 1962, Glen Grady informed him, “The mahogany stain that we use here is Woolsey number A1D3. The varnish, Woolsey number A14C. The white sides, a Starline Gloss White, Pettit, the red copper anti-fouling bottom is Woolsey. It is a paint that is made especially here for the factory and is available through us as is any of the other material. Also, the grey floor paint.”

The 1965 offerings included a 27-foot hardtop version called the *Catalina* and a 28-foot express cruiser, the *Gulfstream*, that had a true cabin replete with a vee berth, enclosed head area (called a “toilet room” in early catalogs), dinette,



The 27-foot Catalina came complete with a “toilet room”.



The Chesapeake was one of the company's mainstays both as a wooden boat and during the 1970s as a fiberglass model. A very different new Chesapeake has been introduced in celebration of the 50th Anniversary.

and a galley with a two-burner alcohol stove, a freshwater sink and an insulated ice box.

Power for the *Gulfstream* was a pair of 145-hp Chrysler inboards—or, twin 160 hp Interceptors (direct drive), a 210 hp Chrysler, or a 240 hp Interceptor. Not satisfied? You also could order a 220 hp Gray Direct Drive.

There was a 22-foot *Chesapeake*, in both open and cuddy configurations, featuring either an I/O or outboards. (The name, but not the exact model, was resurrected for the 50th Anniversary model year.)

It was all top-of-the-line product. But, despite nearly universal acceptance and praise,

within a decade the company was in financial trouble. Part of the problem was a reluctance to embrace the new fiberglass technology that was sweeping the cobwebs of wooden boat building out of the industry. The year the company was founded also marked the beginning of the fiberglass revolution. But Glen Grady, a wooden boat man at heart, was slow to begin the transition.

The other extenuating factor was an unsure grasp of a very basic business principle: how to price a product properly. By the mid-1960s, the company teetered on the brink of bankruptcy.

Grady-White needed help, all the help it could muster.

PART ONE:

THE SMITH'S

GRADY-WHITE BOATS

CHAPTER ONE: FAMILY BUSINESS

In 1968, Eddie Smith was a 26-year-old graduate of the University of North Carolina with a wife and a young son, doing what he had long assumed was his destiny: working in the family business in Lexington. The firm, National Wholesale, was a thriving mail order enterprise selling panty hose and stockings, founded by his father, Eddie, Sr., known to all as “George.”

George, an orphan who had yanked himself up by the bootstraps, was intelligent, ambitious, and possessed of a meticulous, almost fanatical work ethic. He understood the value, the absolute necessity, of customer service.



Eddie Sr. “George” with his sportscar. Both Eddie Smith and his father shared a love of engineering excellence and great performance in cars, boats and airplanes.

“He was just a fanatic about quality, he was a fanatic about customer service and customer satisfaction, and I was learning those things from him when I didn’t know I was learning them,” Eddie recalls. “I look back now and I remember, here I was a fresh college graduate and he’d gone through the eleventh grade at the orphanage, which was as far as they went, that’s all he had the opportunity to do, so I think I felt like I was a lot smarter than he was.”

Eddie laughs at the thought.

“But he had some experience in business. We would sell hosiery by the dozen pair at a time and I remember walking into his office one day and he was dictating a letter to his secretary. Back in those days, it was all short hand, he didn’t have a Dictaphone or anything, and he’d gotten a letter from a lady about one stocking out of the 24 that we had sent to her. She had returned this one pair and it had a hundred nicks in it. It looked like she’d worn it in a rose



Eddie and his father enjoying a boat ride. Everyone, including Eddie, just lit up when George was around.

garden. She had written to him, ‘Mr. Smith, the hosiery didn’t hold up as well as I expected.’

“I was standing there looking at this stocking, incredulous, and he was dictating the nicest letter you ever heard, apologizing tremendously for her disappointment and sending her a new dozen pair of hose. Which I thought was absolutely insane. And I told him so.”

Eddie smiles wryly.

“Obviously, after working with him for a while, day in and day out, I came to understand his wisdom and that’s really carried forward at Grady-White today by our customer service department. We have the highest ratio of customer service representatives to customers in the industry, and they bend over backwards to respond to customer needs.”

His education in the business world notwithstanding, Eddie was restless and not a little bored. He felt a great need to do something on

his own, to prove himself. Truth is, George was of a similar mind, since National Wholesale was doing quite well as it stood.

Fate, as it sometimes does, intervened in a kind of roundabout way.

In his college days, Eddie had learned to fly. “At National Wholesale,” Eddie goes on, “we had a half interest in a Beechcraft Bonanza single engine airplane, and one of the guys involved in it with us was a Pontiac-Buick dealer in Lexington called Allen-White Pontiac Buick. One of the owners was Doug Allen. Doug called me one day and said, ‘I’ve got a little emergency, I need to fly to Greenville to see my partner. Can you fly me down there?’ And I said, yeah. I’d never been to Greenville; it was 200 miles east of Lexington.

“So, we hop in the plane and I fly him down there and the guy who picks us up at the airport is Don White, co-founder of Grady-White, who just happened to be Doug’s somewhat silent partner in the car dealership. Evidently, they had an issue with the dealership. I went over to the boat factory with them and I was sitting there and they just ignored me and talked their business in front of me, and during the course of the conversation I heard Don tell Doug they had a huge problem and they were either going to close the business up or try to sell it.”

Eddie pauses.



George loved the outdoors, hunting, fishing and, of course, hunting dog puppies!



Grady-White's original home was in this old tobacco warehouse.

“So, my wheels started turning. I’d been working with Dad for three years, I really wasn’t happy—not because of Dad, because he was great—but I just didn’t feel like I was accomplishing anything. I was burning with a desire to see if I could do something on my own. Frankly, looking back, it was an unhealthy desire. I was really driven, and flying home, instead of paying attention to the airplane, I’m thinking about how I’m going to tell my Dad I’d like to leave the family business and, oh, by the way, will you lend me a few hundred thousand dollars. Which is exactly what happened.”

With George’s help and the critical advice of the family’s New York accountant and financial advisor Isadore “Izzy” Feldman, who was



Aviation has always been one of Eddie's passions, and the fate of Grady-White Boats hinged on a happenstance flight to Greenville.



Eddie was a young husband and father, but once at Grady-White, his 15-hour days and 80-hour work weeks were difficult.





Eddie as a young father

the architect of George's successful buy-out of his partners in National Wholesale, the Smith family acquired the ailing Grady-White Company.

"For good community relations, once we got established," Eddie says, "I made good on all the debts to all the local creditors, but basically we just bought the assets."

Eddie was now captain of his own corporate ship, master of his fate. And he essentially didn't have a clue what to do. He had precious little experience in boats of any kind. The average john boat of central North Carolina's muddy streams and lakes hardly prepared anyone to mass produce craft destined for the often angry waters of the state's saltwater sounds and bays, much

less the notorious seas of the North Atlantic. Despite his father's tutelage, he hardly knew where to begin. But, he plunged in with the fervor of a new disciple. It was the beginning of a long period of very long hours, seven days a week. No holidays. No weekends off. Work. Just plain hard work as he struggled to master a difficult learning curve. What drove him, he admits today, was fear of failure. It was this that made him understand that he should heed the advice of his father and of Izzy Feldman. It was a hard time for all, not least for wife Jo and young Chris, a fact he regrets today. Nevertheless, the die was cast.

CHAPTER TWO: EDDIE SMITH SETS UP SHOP

It was obvious to Eddie from the outset that the company needed help in many ways, including manufacturing leadership. George and Izzy, ever watchful and poised to jump in if needed, assured him that the financial help would be there in addition to their sage advice. In May, Eddie learned of an engineer and manufacturing expert in town named Wiley Corbett. Eddie called Wiley and after conferring with him, offered him a job.

Wiley recalls, “Empire Brush Company had built a new plant in Greenville in 1961, and they

hired me in 1964 to be plant manager and they moved me from New York to Greenville. I’d been there about four years. But I wasn’t happy and I wanted to change jobs, so I was in the job market and had already put the word out. I knew about this transition at Grady-White, so I went to see Don White. I went to his house—this was right after he and Grady split up—and I said, ‘I can help y’all out down there if you’re interested.’ Well, I never heard back from Don until May of 1968 when he called me and said Smith wanted to talk to me, so I met with Eddie, Senior, and Isadore Feldman, and we worked out a deal, and I went to work in July.”

“Interestingly,” Eddie says, “I talked with people throughout the boating industry about who I should get, and they kept saying, ‘You have to have somebody who knows boats, who runs a boat factory.’ Frankly, as I toured around and looked at boat factories, I didn’t find a single company that was being run like I thought a manufacturing operation should be run. Ultimately, I took a chance, and made the decision that it shouldn’t make any difference whether you were making B-52s or bobby pins, if



Wiley Corbett was exactly the right man at exactly the right time for Grady-White to make it through those early years.



When the Smith family bought Grady-White, the company was already making a tri-hull bowrider in fiberglass called the Capri. Eddie and Wiley kept it in the line until 1974.

you were a great manufacturing person, you'd be a great boat manufacturing person. That really turned out to be true with Wiley."

Wiley, a 1950 graduate of North Carolina State University, had already built a successful résumé in electronics and metal work. After four years, however, Wiley Corbett was also restless and sensed an opportunity at the troubled boat builder. He may not have known just how farsighted he was.

Wiley came to work for Grady-White on a stiflingly hot day in July 1968. He spent the morning walking around the plant, observing

the workers and the workflow closely. He was not impressed. In the afternoon, he gathered the entire work force and announced they would have to improve their professionalism. The "or else" was unstated, but understood. Clearly, a new dawn was breaking through the dust in the rafters. The next day, only about three-quarters of the workers showed up, but what became the Grady-White work ethic was defined that day by the team of Smith and Corbett, and those who did come to work were instilled with the sense of a new mission.

Among the challenges facing the new management team was pricing.

“The company had been selling boats based on what other people were charging, not on what it cost to build them. They had no concept,” Wiley said soon after that day.

Wiley also quickly hired a firm to set up a standard cost system. It was an enormous investment for the nearly bankrupt company, but was one of the best investments it could have made. This system included time and motion standards to measure the efficiency of individuals and the boat building processes. In 1968, in an era when computers and company record-

keeping were virtually unheard of, Wiley hired a computer expert to design a material requirement plan to measure and keep track of materials.

Suffice it to say, these were actions that implemented the tools needed by a company aspiring to become an elite boat builder, and immediately catapulted the company ahead of the entire boating industry. Wiley’s actions and Eddie’s decisions ultimately began to help shape a world-class corporation. In short, that hot July day was the beginning of a transition from good to great.



Even from these humble beginnings, Wiley was putting in systems that were destined to place Grady-White among the elite boatbuilders.



Throughout the 1970s, Grady-White under Eddie and Wiley was primarily a runabout builder.

CHAPTER THREE: FIRST STEPS DOWN A LONG ROAD

Within a year, there were several other critical hires—and some key holdovers that would play major roles at Grady-White.

Eddie assumed the responsibilities of sales and marketing. He understood fully that in tandem, these were the keys that opened the doors that turned on the engine. In that regard, he was most fortunate in having inherited a wry, engaging salesman in Bing Fishman, who had come to Grady-White from a boat dealership in Massachusetts. In some ways, the bespectacled New Englander with his Boston accent stood out like the proverbial sore thumb in drawl-happy

North Carolina. But this savvy Gloucester man was to become one of the company's real assets.

"I was hired by Don White and Glen Grady," Bing recalls. "I had graduated from Northeastern University and went to work for Brown's Gloucester Yacht Yard. When they hired me, frankly, I did not realize the financial shape that G-W was in. They were just prior to bankruptcy before Eddie took over. Dealers were not happy because we were still building wooden boats, and we were Johnny-come-late getting into fiberglass.

"Shortly after Eddie took over, I was offered a job by a prominent boat company near Boston, and I took it. But, when I flew down to Greenville to meet with Eddie to tell him that I was going to resign, he and Doug Allen convinced me to stay. I just had a good feeling about Eddie Smith. And the rest is history. Here I am. I called the other company back and thanked them, but I was going to stay with G-W. Which was a real gamble at that time. The other group was entrenched, established, had no place to go but up and was run by a very fine gentleman. But, I saw something in Eddie that I liked, and that's really what made me stay."



Bing Fishman and Eddie Smith worked on the road to save dealers and get new dealers in the early days. It was a tough job.

For his part, Eddie was just beginning to realize how steep the path, how difficult the road that lay ahead. For one thing, the dealer organization, the heart and soul of any boat company, was in disarray.

“I don’t remember exactly how many dealers the company had early on,” Eddie says, “but as the business declined, they just sort of fell away. And, frankly, as the company struggled, it hadn’t done a lot of things as well as it should have. They didn’t let the quality of the boats slip, but they didn’t pay their warranties on time and sometimes they didn’t pay at all, and there was not a great relationship with the dealers who were left. They probably even sold boats out the back door at the expense of the dealers.”

He stops to reflect.

“So, as a young, energetic neophyte, not knowing what I was getting into, I would strike out on the road to get those dealers enthused about the new ownership and where we were going with the company. Then, I would go to other dealerships that were no longer Grady-White and try to get them back on board and then go to dealerships that had not been Grady-White dealers. I literally got thrown off the premises of a couple of Grady-White dealerships where I went early-on. It was, to say the least, a real learning experience because they didn’t have good feelings about the relationship they’d had, so it was tough, but I would go on the road and travel with Bing and we’d call on existing dealers and potential dealers.



Early dealers included Warren Kelly of Baert Marine in Massachusetts.



*In the early 1970s awards went to dealers
who began to believe in Eddie's dream*



Cataumet Boats and Port of Egypt Marine were Grady-White dealers when Eddie Smith bought the company, and the second and third generations of these family businesses remain dealers in 2009, more than 40 years later. Eddie with Pete Way, Sr., of Cataumet Boats (left) and Eddie with Bill Lieblein, Sr. and Jr. (right).

“I’ll never forget sitting in a dealership in Duxbury, Massachusetts, talking to an older gentleman named Jack Kent who owned Bayside Boats. He was the dealer for some well-known boats made about 20 miles up the road from him, and here I am in my 20s trying to convince him to become a Grady-White dealer. He had an old ship’s store with wooden floors and he would meet with people in the store, in the back. He had a chair he sat in and you’d sit across from him on an old school bus seat.



Eddie, Wiley and Jim Stoneman at a mid-1970s dealer meeting.

“So, there Bing and I are on this old school bus seat and I am making my best pitch about what we’re going to do with this company and how he needs to come on board and not miss this opportunity and I was going on and on and on and he had one of these old-timey hearing aids with the battery pack in his pocket with the volume and the on-off button and the wire that ran up to his ear. Right when I got to the crescendo of my sales pitch he just made a big obvious move of reaching up and turning his hearing aid off. It stopped me in mid-sentence and I didn’t know what to do. He sat there for a minute and I was trying to figure out where I’d gone wrong, when with that New England sense of humor he looked at me and said, ‘Son, you had me ten minutes ago. You need to shut up.’ He became a great dealer and his son and grandson are in the dealership today.”

CHAPTER FOUR: MEANWHILE, BACK AT THE PLANT...

While Eddie and Bing shared rooms in cheap motels and knocked hopefully on doors, Wiley Corbett and crew worked to set the corporate ship aright.

Another key holdover was Edgar Bryan, who had come to work for Grady-White in early 1968, in the midst of turmoil and transition. By then, Glen Grady was already gone and the company had hired an experienced fiberglass boat mold maker, Dick Anderson, who had worked at Hatteras Yachts and who had helped Grady-White make some molds as they began the transition from wood. Among these earliest fiberglass models were versions of the 21-foot *Chesapeake*, a multi-purpose family boat good for open water and for family excursions. For the time, it was a fairly large fiberglass boat.



The 21-foot Nassau (shown here) and the Chesapeake were the largest models Grady-White built up until 1977.

G-W also had a mold for another 21-footer, the *Nassau*, which had the same bottom but a slightly larger cabin. They were also building an 18-footer that they called simply the *Deep Vee*. It was very similar to a wooden boat they were selling. Also in the line were the 18-foot fiberglass *Juniper* and a 16-foot fiberglass version of the wooden *Pamlico*.

Edgar recalls, “I went there as a part-time employee working in the warehouse, and in two weeks they made me purchasing manager and in charge of the stockroom. Then I helped Mr. Feldman figure out what they had purchased from the people they had accounts with that were overdue. We looked to see how it would affect us if we paid those people or didn’t pay those people, how it would affect us with material going forward. And then when Wiley Corbett came in, he moved me from upstairs to downstairs and he looked me right in the eye and said, ‘Well, you’re one of the people we want to keep here, you look like you do a pretty good job.’ So after Wiley came, I was considered to have a full-time job.”

Edgar had proven to Izzy Feldman that he was dedicated, determined—and that he was naturally tight-fisted, a real penny pincher with money. Just



Stern drive power was very popular on Grady-Whites during the 1970s and 1980s.

the right fit for Grady-White in those desperate days. Edgar's frugal thinking helped Grady-White survive.

"I always liked boats," Edgar says, "and I had known of Grady-White for ten years because I knew a couple of local dealers. They were very nice looking boats. And they were very seaworthy. It was right down my line."

Over time, Edgar demonstrated that his knack for thrift and his love of boats was, indeed, a great fit for the company. He mustered out and retired as vice president of finance 38 years later in 2006.

"In the old factory, at the beginning," he says, "there were places in the floor that had a

few boards missing and the others were badly worn because they had those tobacco rollers that had gone around them and of course, the roof leaked. They had a machine that could heat plywood and bend it and they had a big old compressor, and it made an awful lot of noise. The building across the street used to be a sewing factory. G-W had leased that for their fiberglass shop. There was a loading area they used to stage boats that had been pulled and they'd roll them across the street by manual power, three or four people would push them across the street."

It was obvious to Edgar and to all that it was no place for a would-be world-class manufacturer, but he believed in Eddie Smith

and what the future held. He was among the first who latched onto Eddie's vision of what could be.

Soon thereafter, Eddie re-named the company National Boat Works. Use of the name was short-lived and he eventually decided to stick with Grady-White Boats as the name used in marketing and selling the company's products. "The heritage was a factor in keeping the name," Eddie says. "That was another decision I had to make early-on: Do I keep the name of the company? 'Grady-White' didn't necessarily have

significance to anybody and we could have gone with the generic name of a fish, or something like that. But, at the end of the day, I decided to stick with the name because of the strong image it projected of well-built, seaworthy boats."

To fulfill commitments already made (Eddie had learned his father's business ethics well), Eddie and Wiley finished several 27- and 30-footers in wood before the dramatic and complete transition to all-fiberglass began.



A young Eddie Smith on the road meeting potential dealers



In 1975, Grady introduced 18-foot runabouts in outboard, stern drive and with open and closed bows...one hull, four boats. This one is the Adventurer.

CHAPTER FIVE: COMPANY REVITALIZATION

Reincarnated as Grady-White Boats, the company began its future path. A number of critical hires and circumstances provided impetus in those early days. About a year after he bought the company, in early 1969, Eddie hired a young man from Margate, New Jersey, to handle sales in the Mid-Atlantic region, Pete Fuhrman.

“I had the middle Atlantic states, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, and a little part of northern Virginia. In the beginning, I



Pete Fuhrman joined the Grady-White team in 1969, handling sales in the Mid-Atlantic area.

inherited three or four dealers from the Grady and White era and to be honest a couple of them weren't much help. They were angry because of some outstanding warranty claims they thought were owed to them. So they went by the wayside pretty quick. We also tried to get back the dealers who had carried the line before, but it was really like beating your head against the wall. In the end, there were other dealers who had better potential; and several of the Mid-Atlantic dealers we signed on in those days remain great dealers for Grady-White today. In the early years, dealers would change lines of boats like you and I change underwear. Eddie was very honest with his dealers and never turned his back on a problem. And Grady-White today has the most stable dealerships of any boat company that I know of. They're the same, year in and year out.”

Pete Fuhrman worked with Bing and Eddie and the Grady-White organization building the dealer organization for 29 years, retiring in 1998. And for many of those years, Pete also worked along with another long time faithful Grady-White man, Jim Stoneman.

Jim Stoneman was a native of Chagrin Falls, Ohio, who worked as a sales rep for Evinrude Motors for seven years. One of his clients was Grady-White.

“Evinrude used to loan motors to manufacturers,” Jim recounts, “and at the end of the season they had to pay for the motors or return them. And Grady-White, under Don White and Glen Grady, had seven or eight 18 hp motors that they had not paid for or returned. This was in 1968. And my boss said, ‘You go in there and you get the motors or get the money and don’t leave until you get it.’ So, I went to Greenville where they were building boats in this old tobacco warehouse. I walked in and asked to see Don White and Glen Grady and the receptionist said, ‘Well, they’re in there, but they can’t be disturbed.’”

Jim had his orders and did the only thing he knew to do: he walked around the receptionist’s desk and yanked open the office door. What he beheld was a startled group consisting of Eddie and George Smith having an intense conversation with Glen Grady and Don White.

“My boss had said, ‘Get the money or get the motors.’ I didn’t actually get either, but I got one hell of a good job a couple of years thereafter—with Eddie Smith,” Jim chuckles. He



Jim Stoneman came to Grady-White from Evinrude in 1972. His ready grin, enthusiasm and boundless energy were vital to Grady-White’s success during the 29 years he worked with the company.

was obviously bold and knew how to sell well on the road.

Jim was hired to head up sales in the Southeast region in June 1972, and within two years he came in-house at Grady as sales manager. He remained in Greenville as sales manager from 1974 until 1987 when he moved to become Grady-White’s Florida sales representative. From 1987 until 2001, Jim played a crucial role in opening up the critical Florida market. “Jim was amazing,” said one longstanding Florida Grady-White dealer. “Sometimes I think he cared about the success of my business just as much as I did.”



Many of the earliest Grady-Whites retained a faux clinker-built look that harkened back to the wooden boat era. In reality it was a simple manufacturing expedient.

In the more than 29 years with the company, from 1972-2001, Jim's contributions were many but chief among them (in addition to his bold sales style) were his boundless energy, dedication, enthusiasm and sunny disposition. His happy grin was for many years a counterpoint to Eddie's often very tough management style and Wiley's blunt and sometimes painful drive for efficiency.

At the very early juncture, Grady-White was building models in both wood and fiberglass. The company had finally made the transition to the new glass technology, but a few wooden models persisted. In fact, the early fiberglass boats were made from molds that retained a faux clinker-built look. It was a manufacturing expedient, but it probably also served to assuage customers accustomed to that particular look, or hull style.

Grady-White as a company was functional, but fraught with peril. One of the greatest motivations for success is a terror of failure.

"Candidly," Eddie says, "Izzy Feldman told me the company was too far gone to save, that I shouldn't do it." With the bulletproof bravado of youth, Eddie decided to push ahead.

"I figured, if it doesn't make it, it's not my fault," Eddie continues. "So I had nothing to lose. I decided to give it a try."

With Izzy's steady hand on the finances, Wiley Corbett's drive for efficiency plus his manufacturing talents and stubborn refusal to surrender, and Eddie's unrelenting determination to create a strong sales and marketing group, Grady-White as a corporation lurched toward the future.

Success did not come quickly or easily.

"That first year," Eddie says, "we did about a third of the business we thought we'd do and lost about three times as much money as we projected. The second year, we lost about half as much as we projected and the third year we broke even for the first time and we've been doing pretty well ever since."

It was tough on everybody, and nobody drove themselves harder than Eddie and Wiley. For Eddie, in particular, it was a classic 24/7 push. He barely had time for sleep, much less for his wife and young son.



Eddie with his young son Chris. The work was relentless in the early years and there was barely time to celebrate holidays with the family.



Eddie Smith works a boat show in the mid-1970s.

“It was a tough deal,” Eddie says. “It was 15-hour days and 80-hour weeks.”

Instinctively, he knew that the company would probably sink further before it could rise.

“We had to go down before we could go up,” he continues. “We had to re-group and re-train. We pretty much started a new business. For instance, we had a guy who was a wooden boat builder and he was very set in his ways. There were a lot of situations like that where you had people who were so entrenched in a business that was doing poorly and they only knew how to do things a certain way, so I found myself as the chief executive having to let some people go who had been in the boat business longer than I had been on earth.

“It was a very difficult time, very uncertain time. But, we built a good team fairly early on. A nucleus of people. If I had to say what was the one single thing that has helped our company enjoy the success it has, it would obviously be the team of people.”

Climbing out of a hole is never easy, especially if the slope is slippery.

“Frankly,” Eddie says today, “if I’d known then what I know now, I would have been better off just starting a new company. It took us several years to get out of the basement and up to ground level where you would have started from.”

But, there was a foundation to build on. The company had a reputation for quality and seaworthiness.

CHAPTER SIX: BUILDING AND SELLING BOATS

“I took the sales side of the company,” Eddie says. “I was the president of the company, but almost in name only because I was 26 years old and really, really green, but I was president, so I had to make the final decisions, the big decisions on things. But Wiley and I really operated for many years as a team. I did the marketing and left the manufacturing pretty much to him. Now, we didn’t always agree. He was a production guy and geared to get it out the back door. From the training I had with my father in his business, we were perfectionists and you didn’t send the

customer anything unless it was perfect. So Wiley and I had to find a middle ground on that. But frankly, as it turned out, the middle ground was exactly where we needed to be, and we built great boats.”

Eddie and Wiley’s strategic balance furthered the company as they moved into the 1970s. Wiley Corbett remembers, “While Eddie did sales, I did everything else. And we ran that way until I was made president. So we had our two-head thing, two heads better than one. We were honest and had integrity, we were on top of what it cost us



Here are Grady-White's top dealers at the company awards celebration in 1972.



Wiley Corbett and Eddie Smith were the leaders of the team that built a nucleus of people who understood the values and principles of quality and customer satisfaction. (l-r) Pete Furhman, Linda Daniels, Bing Fishman, Wiley Corbett, Eddie Smith and Jim Stoneman.

to make our product, we had a lot of efficiency systems, and the bottom line was that in a couple of years, we were starting to make a little money.

“Grady and White had created fiberglass hulls off the wooden boats, and modified the bottoms, of course, so that’s why they had that look. So, under Smith’s ownership, we continued to made lapstrake-style boats until we put smooth sides on the *204-C Overnighter* in the 1985 model year. The *19 Sportsman*, a fishing boat complete with lift-out fish boxes in the floor and a non-skid deck, and the *21 Nassau*, which was a family boat with little emphasis on fishing, lasted in the line in one form or another until 1978. There had been a 19, but from the time that Eddie took over until prior to 1977, we never

made anything bigger than 21 feet. In the mid-1960s, Grady and White made a 33 called the *Sea Skiff* for saltwater cruising that was a nice boat, but did not sell very well, and the 27 *Catalina* hardtop was the big boat, the one they sold the most of—basically, it was a family cruiser. Grady and White also made a 30.”

Listening to their experienced salesmen and dealers, and trusting Wiley’s penchant for efficiency, Eddie and Wiley made the critical decision to eliminate the big boats and focus on the mid-size and smaller runabouts.



Grady-White runabouts were simple but well-built. By 1974, the company was strongly focused on boats built for “quality, not quantity.”

CHAPTER SEVEN: A NEW LINEUP

“We were producing five or six models,” Wiley Corbett remembers, “a 19, 21—two versions, the *Chesapeake* and the *Nassau*—a 19 cabin, and an 18. Grady and White had made a 17 tri-hull and when I first got there we did a 16-foot hull, the first one I had anything to do with, and later we made a 17 just like it. And then an 18 just like that.”

The 1970 model year 16-footer that was Wiley’s first effort was a very basic runabout that he and Eddie called the *Sting Ray*. It featured a closed bow, a reinforced windshield, and a vinyl

interior. But it was part of the new technology, a building block for the Grady-Whites to come. It was hand laid fiberglass with a reverse chine. Both Eddie and Wiley thought it had a nice ride and the boat was sold as “...a great performer for skiing.” Fishing did not yet significantly enter into the conversation.

The 16-foot *Sting Ray* and the 18-foot runabouts that were crafted in that era were exactly what Eddie, Bing Fishman, Pete Fuhrman, Jim Stoneman and others believed that they could



The 191 Sportsman was introduced in 1970 and stayed in the lineup in one form or another for most of that decade.

sell. The *Sting Ray* lasted six years in the lineup, but—more importantly—it quickly spawned a number of fairly simple 18-foot vinyl-lined runabouts: the stern drive *Rogue* and, later, the *Baron*, the outboard-powered *Challenger*, and the *Adventurer*, all of which differed mostly in whether the bow was open or closed, and the degree of luxury in the guise of color-coordinated upholstery and cushioning in the seating and bolsters. The similar 17-footer called the *174 Duke* came later, in 1975, but it also gave birth to a number of close imitations in the 1970s, including the *Pacer* and the *Sprint*, which were open-bowed, vinyl-lined versions of the same hull in outboard and stern drive versions.

As always, Wiley's mantra was: "The more models, the more sales."

In fact, during that period and later, with Wiley at the production helm most product decisions were made from a manufacturing point of view. That is, if you had an existing 17-foot outboard model, you just modified the mold to make a stern drive version. Voila! You had a new model. This thinking reached its apex in 1983 and 1984 when Grady-White was building nearly 30 models.

One of the earliest fiberglass Grady-Whites, a holdover from the Don White days,



The Rogue was a stern drive-powered 18-foot bowrider built during the 1970s.

was a 17-foot tri-hull called the *Capri*, a name that descended from a series of wooden-boat era family runabouts built during 1965-1966. It was a shallow-draft, flat-bottomed boat available in both outboard and I/O versions.

Many of the models of that 1969-70 period—the 18 *Juniper* cuddy, the 19 *Striper* and the 21 *Chesapeake*—would easily be recognizable as Grady-Whites today with their lapstrake styling and flared bows, but the *Capri* looked nothing like its siblings yet it stayed in the line as a family runabout until 1974. Eddie, Wiley and crew were in the runabout business, no doubt.

Pricing, the bugaboo that virtually torpedoed the original corporation, was a recurring subject of discussion.

"In a meeting somewhere around 1969," Wiley recalls, "Eddie and Isadore Feldman and I were talking about pricing the 21-foot *Chesapeake*. Grady and White had converted from a wooden



By 1978, Grady-White was building a wide variety of multipurpose models. The Adventurer was an outboard powered bowrider, great for skiing and river rides.

model to making it in fiberglass before we came. And I wanted to price these to make a small profit, and you can't believe what Eddie Smith said. He said, 'We can't sell the boat for that much.' And Mr. Feldman says, 'Well then, you can't make the boat.' Just that simple. And in spite of Eddie's initial misgivings, we made and sold many a *Chesapeake*."

This may have been the beginning of the emphasis on value.

By 1973-1974, as it settled into its new facility, the company was heavily promoting the quality

of the boats it built. "The boats built for quality, not quantity," was the headline on the catalog cover in 1973. Through the critical collaboration between Eddie and Wiley, Grady-White was finding its niche in the marketplace.

The middle ground may sometimes have been a skirmish ground between Eddie, who in addition to being a perfectionist, spent many long hours in the field, listening, absorbing from customers and dealers how they might tweak this or that, and Wiley the "Get it done!" hard-nosed producer, but the balance created a



place and a level of quality that set the stage for success.

In the end, the hard work and careful thought won the day. Grady-White may have been perceived as a bit pricey, but this was easily outweighed by its growing reputation for quality.

At this juncture, Eddie and Wiley were hearing from Bing, Jim, Pete and the dealers, that the product mix should be multi-purpose. Thus, they focused squarely on simple runabouts like the *Sting Ray*, and family cruisers like the *Atlantic Weekender* and the *Nassau*, and multi-

use ski boats like the *Rogue* and *Adventurer*, and a couple of small, not exactly hard-core fishing boats named the *Sportsman* and the *Angler*. It was 1971 before even one of Eddie and Wiley's catalog photographs showed a serious fishing rod of any type. Niche marketing was almost unheard of in that era. Grady-White nestled into the unspecialized "Big Picture" of the industry. But, both Eddie and Wiley sensed that there could be another path the company could be taking to even greater strength. It was a few years down the road, but evolution eventually would become revolution.



In December 1972, Grady-White moved into its new plant and took another huge step ahead on the road to becoming among the best.

CHAPTER EIGHT: MAKING A STAKE

Both Eddie Smith and Wiley Corbett knew that a company striving to be world class needed a better facility in which to operate. Dust, sagging floors and leaking roofs need not apply. By 1971, land had been purchased in a new industrial area on the outskirts of Greenville and Wiley set about designing a modern factory specifically for boat manufacturing. By now he'd seen the process up close and understood the needs. In his mind's eye, he could see the ebb and flow of work.

"We came up with this property out here," Wiley says, "and with Eddie's approval, I designed the plant. It was 196 feet wide, and I put another 200 or so feet beyond that for expansion—out to the dry stack storage building. Back then, you built boats and put them in storage and sold them in the spring. That's not the way it works today. We moved here in December of 1972. It was considered the most modern boat plant at the time. It had 120,000 square feet of manufacturing and 30,000 of dry storage."

Grady-White was building nine different boat models in December 1972, from the

16-foot *Sting Ray* to the 21-foot *Nassau* and *Chesapeake*, and it had stamped "Quality, Not Quantity" on the marque.

Under Wiley's sharp eye and rigorous discipline, the new plant not only was well organized, it was focused on doing all the things that must be done to move product efficiently out the door to the dealerships. Wiley intended to do whatever it took to profitably build and move the product that he and Eddie had agreed upon.

Wiley's insistence on thrift and efficient working conditions impacted the staff—and it insured that boats went out the door and profit came in. Wiley's given name itself is apropos. He was a shrewd operator.



This is the office and reception area of the new plant under construction in 1972.

Kirby Pollard, yet another early hire in 1971 who remains a loyal Grady-White man today, remembers the struggle to move the company forward and Wiley's importance to the effort. "We wouldn't be having this conversation if we'd had a different leader at the time. You couldn't have handpicked a better person to guide us through those rough years. He was a person who did not believe in any kind of waste. That just really bothered him. He was a production-minded person and the way he hated waste saved enough pennies to keep us going. I know Wiley. I know how tight he was, so to speak. I don't think we would have made it with a looser company at

the time. It was all we could do to make it then.

"You can plan and teach and educate when you're looking down the road," explains Kirby, "but when you're in the heat of a war and you're trying to get someone to get out of the way from getting their head blown off, you got to say, 'Hey, move now.' That was Wiley."

Like Edgar Bryan, Kirby was another of Grady-White's tough-minded, get it done and out the back door kind of guys. He fit well with Wiley and he believed in Eddie Smith's dream, too. Kirby remains a Grady-White man today, still working hard to get product out the door in the 50th Anniversary year.



Grady-White moved into the new plant in December 1972, just in time for the Arab oil embargo. Tough times again!

CHAPTER NINE: WEATHERING THE STORMS

As Grady-White inched toward the mid-1970s, the hard-working, hardheaded team of Smith and Corbett forged the nucleus of a management team that would endure for decades to come. Eddie Smith offers, “If I had to name the one single thing that has helped our company enjoy the success that it has, it obviously would be the team of people. All of our key people have grown up through the business, and we built a nucleus that understood the principles and the values of quality, customer satisfaction—things that were the foundation that we were building upon. We had to weed out a lot of people along the way

that didn’t buy into those principles. But, we just have been very, very blessed to build a wonderful team of people that I would say is unlike anything that exists in the boating industry that I’m aware of.

“Some of our defining moments at that juncture were brought about by difficult times,” Eddie says, “and we really got tested where we were just hanging by our fingernails. This business was so cyclical and seasonal back in the early days that you would gear up in the spring and hire a lot of people, build boats for the season, and then come fall and winter time you’d have to lay a lot of people off and cut your overhead and then in spring re-hire and retrain, which frankly really hurt your ability to have a consistent quality level.”

As the Scots poet Robert Burns wrote, “The best laid schemes o’ mice and men...” On October 17, 1973, the member nations of the Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (which consisted of OPEC plus Syria and Egypt) decided to punish the United States, its European allies and Japan, for their support of Israel against Syria and Egypt in the Yom Kippur War by ceasing to ship



Polishing the hull molds in the new plant



Beginning in 1972, Grady-White produced all boats with enough foam flotation to be unsinkable, even though this flotation is not required in today's boats 26 feet or longer.

oil to them. It also occurred to OPEC that this was an opportune time to jack up oil prices dramatically. The effect was immediate and devastating. Economic output was floored, inflation soared.

“We went through the oil embargo in 1973,” Eddie continues, “and the recession that followed took out about 40-45 percent of all boat manufacturers. They went away. And probably an equal percentage of boat dealers. So we had an incredible cleansing, if you will, and like all industries, the weakest go and the strongest survive, and frankly we just barely survived. We had just moved into our new factory in January, just in time for the oil embargo, and you couldn’t give a boat away.”

But, one way or another, survive they did.

1972 and 1973 were noteworthy on at least one other account, too. In 1972, Grady-White

introduced foam flotation throughout the model line, a feature that helped solidify the line as the premier saltwater boat. (The all-fishing identification was to evolve later.) From Day One of the Smith Era, Grady-White had used hand-laid fiberglass, a more expensive process than employing chopper guns to spray fiberglass bits into a mold. These are just two of many reasons that continued to cement a reputation for quality and safety.

Wiley Corbett comments, “As you do your day-to-day stuff, you deal with your problems, and you make decisions. We always made honest decisions, everything has always been on top of the table, and we did everything we could to do what it takes to run a first-class business. And we made a lot of good decisions. The key is: Number One, know your true cost. It doesn’t matter if you’re running a clothing store, or a welding shop or a boat plant. You must know the true cost of your product. In which you have to factor materials, labor—you also must know what your labor efficiency is so you can factor that in. You put in all of your overhead, and once you do all that you add your profit. And when you tally at the end of the year, that profit should be the number you pegged. Pricing is the most critical thing. Knowing your true cost.”



Vinyl liners, color-coordinated cushioned seating, drink holders, roomy glove boxes and fold-down lounge seating were typical for a Grady in the mid-1970s.

And, he adds, “If you haven’t made any money, you can’t weather the storm.”

As the Arab nations lorded over the rest of the world, the economic storms continued to roil the boating industry. It wasn’t all gloom and doom, of course. Perhaps it is true that the definition of optimism is being a boat manufacturer. But the industry picked itself up, dusted itself off, and started anew.

Despite the hiccup in the economy, by the 1974 model year beginning August 1973, Grady-White’s burnished reputation boosted sales to over 1000 boats in nine models, including nearly 300 *212 Chesapeake* units and more than 200 *191 Sportsman* (a closed-bow, lapstrake-look boat with an emphasis on fishing).

But, big things were brewing. A change was in the offing.



The 20-foot 1975 center console Hatteras, the 20-foot walkaround model Gulfstream, and 25-foot walkaround Kingfish, were fiberglass-lined for easy clean up and sure draining and began Grady-White’s turn to a a saltwater fishing niche.

In late January 1974, Eddie, Wiley and crew went off to the 41st Annual Chicago Boat and Sports Show at McCormick Place in the Windy City. It was at the time perhaps the most important boat show in the United States. As they cruised the aisles, sizing up the competition, looking for innovation, they spied something that piqued their curiosity. On display was a triple-sponson cabin boat with something they had not seen before. Instead of narrow side decks, the boat had a molded-in walkaround circling the cabin.

On the flight home, Wiley and Eddie compared notes on all they had seen. Wiley studied his pack of salted peanuts (probably trying to estimate cost) and finally turned to Eddie.

“That’s what we need to make.”

“What’s that?”

“That walkaround.”

So, after returning to Greenville, the company began designing a 20-foot walkaround.

“We redesigned one of our 19-foot hulls,” Wiley says, “to create an all-new 20-foot walkaround on a vee hull: the *204-C*. We introduced it in the 1975 model year, and it was our bread and butter for years and years and years. Top selling boat. Twice as many as any other model for quite some time. We saw a



With the new walkaround concept in the 1975 204-C Hatteras Overnighter, Grady-White had its first mega-seller. This top selling boat remains in the line today, reincarnated as the 208 Adventure.

walkaround on a multi-hull, but we were seen as the pioneers, the pushers of the walkaround concept. And the reason was simple. We put it on a vee hull instead of a multi hull. In terms of sales, they couldn't get that multi hull off the ground, and we took the chance that if we put it on a lapstrake vee hull, in fiberglass, it would sell. And, man, did it ever. We ended up with *Overnighter* as the name, but we actually called it the *Hatteras* at first."

Grady-White had its first mega-seller. With it came a critical discovery, one that ultimately would ensure the company's success. This discovery was in its embryonic phase, to be sure, but was very real and would later become clearly understood: Grady-White's most successful

products are developed from collective thought, collective input, and collective action.

In that era, most of the collaborative thought was between Wiley and Eddie (with some input from the sales force and key dealers). But, Eddie and Wiley were beginning—just beginning—to understand its importance. What's more, as Grady-White continued to enhance a reputation for quality, the company's proud slogan became "The Well-Built Boat." Pride in the company and in fiberglass craftsmanship that had begun with Wiley's dressing down employees one hot July afternoon in 1968, was clearly to distinguish Grady-White from its competition. It was also a path to the future.



As Grady-White began to turn to more of a saltwater fishing boat mix, company leaders, especially Wiley Corbett (r), became avid fishing fans.

PART TWO: ESTABLISHING THE BRAND

CHAPTER TEN: CASTING

1975 was a very important year for Eddie's growing company. In addition to the breakthrough product introductions and burgeoning sales of the walkaround *204-C Hatteras Overnighter* and its stern drive counterpart the *205 Gulfstream*, plus the 20-foot center console *204*, there were several key hires that were to help shape the company for decades.

Although nobody imagined it at the time, least of all Wiley, perhaps the most important hire in terms of overall lasting importance to Grady-White and to the marine industry as a whole, was a short, feisty young woman from Massachusetts, Kris Carroll. Hired as a production control clerk that year, she rose through the ranks to become president of the company in 1993 and remains at the helm of the company in 2009. Through her drive and energy as well as her keen interest in people and people improvement, she also came to be an important leader in community, marine industry and environmental conservation circles.

"Wiley was executive vice president then," Kris Carroll says, "and I was responsible for keeping records and that sort of thing, and I was the one who determined what boats we were going to ship every day. The reality is that in those days, Grady-White was still very much a struggling company. As production control clerk I was helping Wiley make sure we could best function each day by shipping the right mix of boats to the right places so that things evened out for our business.

"In 1975, we were building almost all runabouts like the *183 Rogue*, the *185 Challenger*,



Kris Carroll joined Grady-White in 1975.

and the stern drive version of that, the *186 Baron*. They were mostly river boats, ski boats, and although they were good quality they were not terribly expensive—or terribly profitable for that matter. So we really needed to be careful about exactly what boats were going to ship each day.” Wiley discovered that Kris was a careful manager and planner, and a natural self-starter and motivator. Over time, these traits did not escape the notice of Eddie Smith. “Every department she went to, things got better,” he says.

Another critical hire in 1975 was Doug Gomes. Doug was to have tremendous influence over the long-term at Grady-White in production, sales and marketing, plus industry and community relations. In the 1990s, among many other important contributions, Doug was one of the architects of the marine industry’s customer satisfaction program. He became vice president of sales in 1990, and in October 2005 he was promoted to senior vice president. In December 2007, he assumed his current role as senior advisor for market development and continues to make a contribution to Grady-White in his work outside the plant.

In 1975, however, Doug was looking for his place in the world as a recent graduate of East Carolina University, a very important presence in Grady-White’s hometown of Greenville. ECU was

an ambitious, growing school that, like Grady-White Boats, was very eager for respect and eager to be recognized as moving from good to great. Doug’s recently earned political science degree from ECU was very little help in his job interview at Grady-White, but his get-it-done attitude was a good match with Wiley Corbett’s production philosophy. He quickly got a job offer.

“I started working in manufacturing, in the hull department. And eventually, I worked my way up to running the fabrication department and later I worked in quality control including as manager, and after that I was production manager. I was in manufacturing for about 15 years and then sales and marketing for 17.” The bottom line is that, from the beginning, Doug was the go-to guy to get the job done, no matter what his assignment. Wiley liked that trait.

Industry-wide declines continued to be troublesome. In 1975, units were down somewhat but Grady-White continued to sell a considerable number of runabouts, including the 17-foot stern drive bowrider *174 Pacer*; the outboard-powered bowrider *183 Adventurer*; an 18-foot stern drive bowrider, the *184 Rogue*; closed-bow 18-footers of the *185* and *186* series; the 19-foot fishing-oriented runabout *191 Sportsman* series; the 19-foot cuddy cabin *191-C Atlantic Weekender*; the *192 Tournament* dual console; the 20-foot center



Doug Gomes also joined Grady-White in 1975 and spent many years in manufacturing under Wiley and later moved to dealer development and sales. As Vice President of Sales, at dealer meetings he often used a stunt to make a point. And this performance on stilts in the mid 90's was no exception.

console 204 series; the walkaround cabin 20-foot 204-C; the well-known stern drive, the 21-foot 212 *Chesapeake*; plus the 21-foot cuddy 212-C *Nassau*. It is noteworthy to mention that the newly introduced walkaround 204-C and the Grady-White signature 21-foot runabout 212 led the pack far and away in terms of units. Clearly they were onto something with this new walkaround idea.

Meanwhile, in 1976 Wiley Corbett hired a well-known boat designer and naval architect, Bruce Collier, who had a role in the walkaround design that Eddie and Wiley had seen in Chicago, and ensconced him and his family in Greenville. Over the next few years, Bruce

was to make many contributions to Grady-White style and engineering before moving on. Throughout this period, Grady-White continued to make a mix of multi-use product, including stern drives and runabouts. The 16-, 17-, and 18-footers were ski boats. The classic lapstrake design, now just molded in, continued in two models (19- and 21-footers) until 1978, and in the 204-C until the 1984 model year.

But a saltwater mindset began to encroach on traditional thinking.

There was some grumbling in the ranks. “Everybody kept talking about how we need a big boat, a bigger boat,” Wiley says.

CHAPTER ELEVEN: A CHANGE IN TACK

In 1976 Eddie Smith attended NATCON, the national conference of the National Marine Manufacturers Association—a group that he had become involved in as deeply as possible, ever mindful of the early training under his father. Typically at these sessions, Eddie not only worked the room, but the entire conference. He listened to the lectures. He kept a keen ear out for talk at the dinners. He asked questions. He learned. He learned a lot about who was doing what and how successful it was.

He came to the conclusion, as did Wiley, that a move up in size was indicated. Everyone is going bigger, they agreed.

Working with Bruce Collier, what Eddie, Wiley and team came up with was a 25-foot, 9.5-foot beam walkaround, the *254 Kingfish*—the widest production boat in the industry at that time. In designing it, Bruce asked Wiley, “What do you want the profile to be?” Wiley responded, “I like that raised shear look. I can get more cabin height.” The advent of one of Grady-White’s most distinguishing features, the raised shear line identity, was just that simple.

The *254 Kingfish* was purely a fishing boat and the beginning of a major shift in design and marketing. Grady-White was a company steeped in the practice of building mostly small runabouts and small family cruisers, except for the new 20-foot walkarounds and center console.

“At the time, the *Kingfish* was a little ahead of the curve,” Wiley says. “But that’s the boat we built. Eventually, the boat turned out fabulous, but at the time maybe we could have done better with other things. The boat did pretty well and it helped us learn a lot about the market for bigger boats.”

Also in 1976, another name was added to the Grady-White roster of important players: David Neese.

David was, by his own admission, a “kind of handy guy” with a stop-start history of college attendance. Early in 1976, by coincidence, he did some fiberglass work on Eddie Smith’s cottage at Bath, North Carolina.

The path to Grady-White was indirect. “I answered an ad in the newspaper for a ‘mold finisher,’” he says. “Thinking ‘molding of a house,’ I came in and interviewed with Bruce Collier.



The 25-foot 9 1/2 inch beam stern drive 254 Kingfish was the biggest fiberglass boat built in its category in 1976 when it was introduced. While in itself it wasn't a home run for Grady, it taught the company and the dealers a lot about bigger boats. The real payoff came later in the 1980s with the Kingfish's direct descendants, the outboard Sailfish and others.

They were working on a 24. I didn't know much about boats. But, I remember Bruce telling our HR person at the time, 'At least, he's enthusiastic.'"

David has spent almost his entire Grady-White career in engineering, except for one year when he worked in manufacturing as Grady-White built the 25-foot I/O *Kingfish*. "A small group of us finished the tooling. We made 30 boats, twin and single I/Os, and got that thing up and running. Then I went back to engineering."

The next year, Grady-White did the outboard versions when Johnson came out with big 200 hp engines. "We did a twin 25 with those engines on it and it went to the New York International Boat Show. Every year I've been here," he says reflectively, "there's been an improvement of some sort in the product, in the way the company was run, the principles that we used, how we



David Neese joined Grady-White in 1976 and except for a short stint in manufacturing has been part of the engineering team ever since. He has led engineering since 1989 and was promoted to vice president of engineering in 2002.

analyze ourselves, the employee benefits—those kinds of things."

David ran the gamut from "punching in and out..." to management, working his way to engineering supervisor in 1984. He has led the engineering team since 1989 and eventually became vice president of engineering in 2002, heading the product development team in the design and enhancement of many of Grady-White's best known and loved products including today's express models and larger dual consoles.

Sales climbed steeply back up in the 1976 model year, and yet again in the 1977 model year.

1977 began the salient turn to a fishing boat emphasis, propelled by the success of the *204 Fisherman*, *205 Gulfstream*, the *204-C Overnighter*, the *Chesapeake*, and the 1977 introduction of the *200 Dolphin* and the *201 Marlin*. The *200 Dolphin* and its stern drive counterpart, the *201 Marlin*, became an important part of Grady-White's product line for five years as Wiley and Eddie led the company to become more of a saltwater fisher versus runabout builder. These sturdy closed-bow cuddy cabins were filled with fishing amenities including easy-to-clean fiberglass liners, non-skid decks, roomy ice and fish boxes, and a cozy cabin for a respite from the coastal sun.



Eddie and Jim Stoneman looking over some of longtime Grady-White friend and highly respected marine photographer Jerry Imber's 4" X 5" transparencies of the 200 Dolphin in 1976 for the 1977 catalog.

By 1983, the “more models, more sales” mantra and Grady-White’s move to a very hardcore fishing lineup was the downfall of that once very popular Grady-White standby, the *Chesapeake* stern drive. It did not survive the transition to style options for every model.

In the early days of the Smith and Corbett era, there was a push to improve the bottom tier of the line. They had inherited a fleet of small boat molds, like the 16-foot *Pamlico* and the 17-foot tri-hull *Capri*. This seemed the logical trend to follow: smaller is cheaper, cheaper means greater volume, et cetera. These models offered minimal optional equipment. Anything to produce a good boat, upholding the brand’s reputation, at less expense. Among the cost-reducing features were vinyl

liners. These, however, can be slippery, and they can tear. They are not ideal for fishing, especially in saltwater.

Eventually, in a move to improve quality, strength, and enhance the fishing function that Wiley was becoming so focused on, Grady-White began to use non-skid fiberglass liners. Fiberglass is tough. Fiberglass is easy to clean. Fiberglass helps stiffen the hull. With non-skid deck surfacing, it provides very good footing. It also adds weight, which contributes to a boat’s stability in a seaway—an important factor for rough water fishermen. Scuppers could now be molded in, creating a self-bailing cockpit. A scrub brush was all it took to dislodge fish remains, and the whole thing could be hosed down. Now the customer’s



The annual photo shoot/bonding session/fishing trip to Harkers Island, North Carolina, sparked interest in saltwater fishing throughout the company.

tough Grady-White can sit in the rain through a coastal thunderstorm and the boat doesn't fill up and swamp; rainwater and cleaning water just drain right out.

The first models to utilize these fiberglass liners were the 1975 breakthrough *204 Hatteras* center console and *204-C Hatteras Overnighter* walkaround. But utilizing the fiberglass non-skid liners did not happen all at once. In the period 1976-1981, there were 19-foot river runabouts that still used Grady-White's tried-and-true vinyl liners. In the *Holiday*, *Riviera*, and the outboard *Angler*, the ice boxes were mostly built for picnics and refreshments, not fish.

And Grady-White was continuing to experiment in producing what they were told customers wanted. The epitome of this thinking was the 1978 introduction of the *203 Seville*, a vinyl-lined "luxe" Grady-White replete with padded sundeck and wraparound seating. A year and a half and 50 boats later, Eddie and Wiley wisely concluded, "That's not our market," and left that niche for builders like Cobalt, Regal and others to explore.

Maybe as a result of annual fishing trips *cum* bonding sessions at Harkers Island, Eddie and Wiley—especially Wiley with his growing love for fishing—believed it was time for a serious shift in corporate emphasis.

"As far as defining moments in the company in its direction," Eddie says, "I think clearly one of them was when we decided to specialize. Up to that point, we were making ski boats and bow riders and weekender cabin boats and fishing boats and we were neither fish nor fowl. We decided to cast our lot with the offshore fisherman and start building just coastal fishing boats, self-bailing and unsinkable, and that really was a defining moment. We never veered from that coastal, high quality, high seakeeping ability, that is really a very small market and we carved out a niche and stayed with it. We carved out an initial niche at the top of that market, sort of the Mercedes, if you will, of that particular limited market. There are only a small number of people who are going to go out of sight of land in small outboard boat."

By 1978, Eddie Smith had realized the need for a stronger marketing and advertising



In 1978, Grady-White introduced the 203 Seville. With a padded sun deck and wraparound seating, the Seville was a departure from the growing focus on saltwater fishing. After a year and a half, it was gone from the lineup.

effort and he hired a newly formed local company, Adams and Longino, to do projects for Grady-White. The company was formed by Frank Longino and Charlie Adams. Those early projects were the beginning of a 31-year long relationship that continues today. Grady-White and Eddie Smith are nothing if not loyal to vendors and associates who perform well over time.


When Adams and Longino came aboard, Jim Stoneman was the sales manager, with Wiley and Eddie running the factory show. Frank Longino was fresh from a stint with an advertising agency in Chicago where he had studied the tactics of marketing guru Jack Trout, and learned an important facet of the ad man's arsenal: positioning. Avis, for example, was positioned as

"Because we're only No. 2 in car rentals, we try harder," in its ad campaigns to contrast it from Hertz; 7-Up was positioned as the *"Un-Cola,"* to draw a distinction from Coke and Pepsi. In earlier years, *"Think small,"* had shown phenomenal success in contrasting Volkswagen from Detroit's big car offerings of the era.

Frank and Charlie Adams listened to Stoneman's story of the company and said: "So, you're really in the family fishing machine business."

It was suggested then that a Grady-White purchase would be positioned as the *"The Comfortable Move To A Fishing Machine,"* which, while helping establishing Grady-White as a real hardcore fishboat builder, would contrast Grady-White's breakthrough walkaround cabin boats from the more Spartan hardcore fishboats mostly coming out of Florida at the time. In other words, not only did purchasing a Grady-White give you the tough seagoing capability to go hardcore offshore or inshore fishing in big water, in a Grady-White you could be comfortable enough to take your wife and kids with you, you could get out of the weather, and you had a place for a nap on a boat like the *204-C Overnighter*.

The slight re-focus of positioning from purely hardcore fishing to take into account



Grady-White.

Cockpit for the fight. Cabin for the night.

Grady-White's big cockpits and walk-around cabins make family fishing comfortable.

We began building walk-around cabin fishing boats years ago. Because we knew that all fishermen aren't tough old salts that go outside every day. With the protection of Grady-White's walk-around cabins, some tender, new salts like your wife and kids can start enjoying fishing with you. They'll have all the fun of offshore fishing. Plus, they get the protection of a cabin, windshield, top and side curtains when the weather gets tough.

Solid, North Carolina fishing machines.

Grady-White walk-arounds are tested off North Carolina's Outer Banks. They're built to take the toughest seas. Add self-bailing cockpits, walk-around cabins, fiberglass liners, insulated fish boxes with

overboard drainage, plus built-in rod racks and you have a machine that's built for family fishing.

See the comfortable fishing machines at your Grady-White dealer.

We have an entire line of comfortable fishing machines like the 205 Gulfstream pictured here. From 19 to 25 feet. In stern drives and outboards. So, visit your Grady-White dealer and take a look. Take your family too. With a Grady-White walk-around, you'll never have to leave your crew on the dock again.

The comfortable fishing machines.

GRADY-WHITE BOATS

P.O. Box 1527, Greenville, N.C. 27604 • Telephone (919) 752-2111
Visit Your Grady-White Dealer

No mistaking what the marketing thrust of this 1979 ad is...comfort AND fishing.



By the very beginning of the 1980s you began to see more tackle boxes than waterskis in Grady-White literature. But there is still very much a family message.

family fishing was important because it helped define a natural core focus for Grady-White. In reality the focus had always been there, but now it became a clearly defined marketing mantra. The family was involved, a factor critical to clear differentiation and success at the time. This family focus became even more important as time went on. What's more, the position was exactly right for a company that was formulated, heart and soul, on family. It reflected the relationship between Eddie and George, and it resonated well with the many family-owned dealerships, and the type of customers that were showing up in those

dealerships. Over the coming decades, while the product line emphasis alternated between "more fishing" at some points and "more family," at others, in the end, this family-and-fishing orientation was exactly right for Grady-White, because the Boomer demographic was starting to get married.

Interestingly, it was apparent that the rest of the industry couldn't figure out what Grady-White was up to. In essence, then, Grady-White got a ten-year run with the walkaround cabin "Comfortable Move" idea before anybody else decided they were going to copy the style. The strategy was spot-on.

CHAPTER TWELVE: SURPRISE, SURPRISE

In 1979, Grady-White's spring sales meeting held a lot of surprises for Grady-White dealers.

Wiley comments, "The dealers came rolling in here thinking we were going to build a bunch of ski boats. I said, 'Listen, I want to tell you something: we need to make 19-foot fishing boats. We aren't going to make as many of these ski boats.' They wanted liveaboard, they wanted ski boats. They weren't into fishing."

In spite of the sales force and the dealers' initial skepticism, Wiley had his engineering team completely redesign the 19-foot hulls that year into saltwater fishing boats, mostly fiberglass-lined (four of the five), and in 1980

introduced "Five New V-Lift 19s for the 1980s."

Despite the misgivings among dealers and sales force who still wanted runabouts, the 19 series—the dual console *190 Tarpon*, the dual console *192 Bluefish*, the closed bow outboard *195 Sportsman* and stern drive *196 Atlantic*—all got fiberglass liners and a saltwater fishing emphasis. And, as if to reinforce the decision, by 1982 Grady-White was putting fiberglass non-skid liners in every single boat model they built. It was a certainly a commitment to the saltwater fishing niche.

Wiley continues, "We made those five models of the 19 and they proved to be fabulous boats for us. No cabins on them. We still make that sort of boat today. These and the *204-C* were the top-selling boats forever. Twice as many as anything else. That's what people wanted."

In 1979, Wiley brought in Florida designer Jim Wynne, "Father of the Stern Drive," to do the *240/241 Offshore* walkaround. This was not a resounding success, mostly because, while seaworthy, the ride wasn't always great in rough water. But, Wiley and Eddie were convinced that the future lay in sportfishing.



The 24-foot 240 Offshore was introduced in 1980 and while it was a sturdy boat, some said it occasionally had a rough ride. Later in the 1980s, Grady-White revolutionized the brand with the introduction of the phenomenal ride of the SeaV² hull.

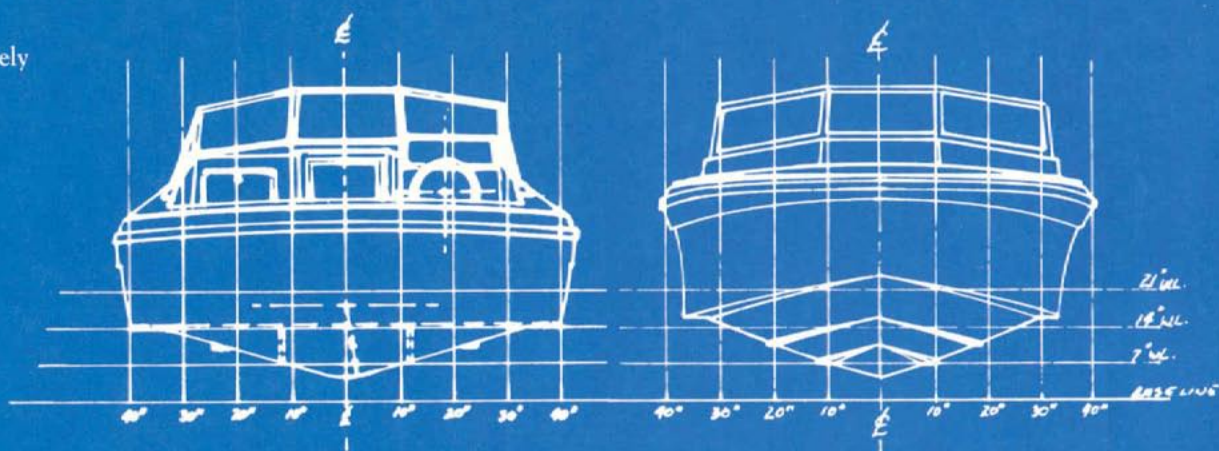
Five new Vee-Lift 19's for the 1980's.

We've designed a completely new hull shape for our 19-foot line. These five new boats combine wide beams for fast, easy planing with a soft-riding vee-hull.

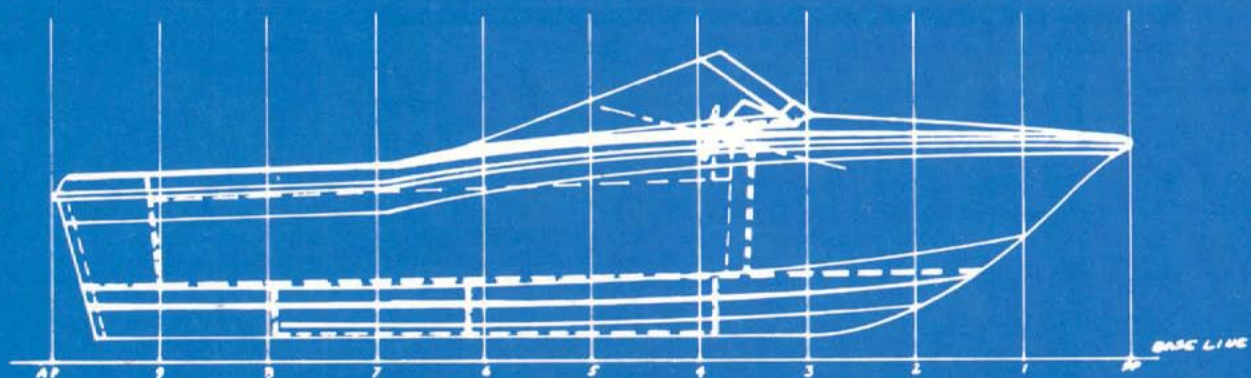
The result?

Grady-White's Vee-Lift hulls. Five new boats that leap to a plane, push easily even with lower horsepower, and seaworthy enough to take on open water.

Take a look at all five Vee-Lift Grady Whites. With choices of open or closed bows, plush carpeted interiors or easy to clean fiberglass cockpit liner, you're sure to find the Vee-Lift that's right for you in the 1980's.



Designed by Grady-White's Chuck Granie.



At the 1979 dealer meeting, Wiley told the dealer, "No more of these ski boats!" and with that introduced fiberglass-lined, self bailing 19-foot Grady-Whites. They were quickly successful and similar boats remain in the lineup today.



The introduction of more powerful outboards and navigation advances of Loran C set the stage for the big success of the 255 Sailfish introduced mid-year in 1980. The Sailfish remained in the line until 2008.

So they expanded the fishing boat line. Mid-1980 witnessed the introduction of the 255 *Sailfish*, the boat that, along with the advance in Johnson outboard power, proved the viability of the bigger-boat/saltwater concept that the *Kingfish* had begun three years earlier.

Improving technology by both Johnson and Evinrude was propelling the offshore fishing mode. Single 235 hp and twin 175 hp engines made it possible to roam far from shore. This was augmented by many advances in electronics as

well. Loran-C was far from perfect (GPS was still restricted to military usage), but it made a huge difference in a boat owner's peace of mind going offshore.

1981 saw the engineering and introduction of the 220 *Bimini*, 221 *Pacific* and 222 *Bahama*, 22-foot non-walkarounds that lasted three years in the lineup. What was significant about these 22-footers was the family-friendly marine head area and seating. The walkaround version came the next year and eventually became known as the



The 22-foot walkaround Seafarer was family friendly with a cabin and optional head and other creature comforts. The Seafarer remains in the line today.

Seafarer, offered, of course, in outboard, stern drive and Sea Drive.

In 1981 and 1982, these six 22-foot boats reaffirmed the premise of the *204-C Overnighter*, that a relatively small walkaround cabin model made a terrific coastal boat, especially for fishing families. The walkaround on the 22-foot *Seafarer* made it easier to anchor and dock, plus the *Seafarer* had good seating in the cockpit, a nice cabin for an afternoon nap, plenty of seaworthiness, storage and, most importantly

(different from the *204-C* and the “*Vee-Lift*”) room for a marine head. This made families happy and became quite popular. The 22-foot *Seafarer* quietly remains a Grady-White mainstay 27 years later in 2009. In part thanks to these 22-footers, Grady-White learned that “heads sell boats,” and “seats sell boats,” and “cup holders sell boats.” The idea of carefully listening to what customers wanted was beginning—just beginning—to catch on.



The enthusiastic introduction of the 22-foot Tournament models in 1982 touted the boats as a great alternative to replace the center console sportfisherman. As time went on, they became even more successful when Grady-White figured out how to equip them more comfortably and with an enclosed head.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN: FAMILY-FISHING BALANCING ACT

The headline excitement in the early 1980s for Grady-White wasn't heads, seats and cup holders on the 22 and larger models; that excitement belonged to the saltwater-oriented dual consoles. The *19 Tournament* dual console was such a success that in 1981 the concept spawned the 22-foot *Tournament* series, boats "destined to replace the center console sportfisherman" because of more room for electronics, more cockpit space, more ice boxes and fish boxes, plus the protection of a windshield and top and side curtains. Bringing home the fishing focus, the Grady-White product catalog cover that year depicted a *225 Tournament* equipped with an OMC Sea Drive power and bracket, plus a mini tuna tower, with a blue marlin laying across the back of the boat. (The age of Grady-White's strong sportfishing catch and release and conservation ethic had not yet arrived, nor for anyone in the industry.) In fact, every catalog cover published in from 1980 until 1991 depicted a fish, fishing scene, or a boat emblazoned with "Grady-White Fishing Team." Grady-White knew where it was headed at last. It was going fishing. Offshore. In saltwater.

Perhaps it's not completely surprising that when the usage concept was modified to be more family-friendly, and Grady-White began to emphasize the available protection of Vista tops and canvas, the 22- and 24-foot dual consoles became very popular not only for the fisherman but for everyone. Twenty-six years after being introduced, the *Tournament* models are going strong. For 2009, Grady-White introduced a 30-foot version and the company now offers by far the most complete line of dual consoles in the industry, including 19-foot, 20-foot, 25-foot, 27-foot and 30-foot versions. Today, they are touted as the "ultimate coastal family boats," and they are great for everything from camping trips to ocean forays to coastal cruises. Sportsmen and women also hail the *Tournament* models as superb fishing vessels—not surprising with all that Grady-White learned about saltwater fishing in the 1980s. Certainly they were not destined to replace the center console sportfishers, but they offered a great alternative for families with a coastal lifestyle.

Grady-White also updated its venerable *204-C Overnighter* in 1984, giving it—like all

Grady-Whites—a smooth, all-white finish. After 16 years, the lapstrake “clinker-built” look and the colored stripe below the gunwale was gone from the line for good. “All white” and “smooth sides” were a manufacturing expediency, consistent with Wiley’s efficiency and manufacturing ethic, but in time the all-white hull became a Grady-White signature look, and allowed owners to spot their favorite boats from long distances. The 20-foot walkaround, in the form of the *208 Adventure* in the 50th Anniversary year, remains popular with families 34 years later, in part due to Grady-White’s constant updating and continuous improvement.

In 1985, a head became an option on the 20-foot walkaround. The moms and kids in Grady-White boating families rejoiced. Grady-White updated the model again in 1988,



The 25-foot Trophy Pro 25s were very much hard core sportfishing oriented and came about as Grady moved more and more to fishing.

and through the 1980s the *204-C Overnighter* remained Grady-White’s most popular model in terms of numbers sold. But the real emphasis on family cruising and very casual family fishing would have to wait until the mid-to-late 1990s and beyond.

In 1984 and 1985, in fact throughout the early 1990s, most of Grady-White’s talented staff, especially Wiley, were focused squarely, if not exclusively, on saltwater fishing and not quite so much on family needs. In fact, the company probably took the fishing emphasis too far with several models. The Grady-White customers who were truly fanatical fishermen—not a majority as it turned out—might argue that during the 1980s, Grady-White learned to make truly great saltwater fishing boats. And it is inarguable that they did make truly terrific fishboats, “state of the art sportfishermen” as the advertising tag line went.

This acute emphasis, if you can call it that, began with the early 1981 dual consoles and continued with the 1983 *Trophy Pro 25* (you guessed it, available in outboard, stern drive and Sea Drive bracket). The *Trophy Pro* was a natural outgrowth of the home-run *254 Kingfish* and *255 Sailfish* “big boat/offshore capability” concept with even more emphasis on fishing.

In 1984 and 1985, there was no runabout left in

the lineup. The last photo of waterskiing activity for many years appeared in the 1983 catalog. In those years, Grady-White went whole hog with the fishing concept, introducing the 249 *Fisherman* center console (outboard only!) that “packed in more fishing features than you can imagine in a 24-foot boat.” It’s also significant, and an indication of Grady-White’s thinking and growing interest in more family comfort, that even a hardcore fish boat like the 249 offered an optional (outside) head. (Grady-White did not make the breakthrough move to enclosed heads in center consoles until the 1994 263 *Chase*.)

1985 also saw the introduction of the *Offshore Pro* 24-foot walkaround—of course in outboard (the 246), stern drive (247) and in the 248 Sea Drive bracket. Like the *Trophy Pro* 25, the 24-foot *Offshore Pro* as well the *Gulfstream* first introduced in 1987, reduced the cuddy cabin to a rod and tackle storage bin with a single bunk. (The *Gulfstream* did have two bunks—one folded down, not exactly the ideal place for a five-year-old’s nap.) The boats were all touted as offering overboard draining, huge insulated fish boxes, re-circulating livewells and storage for literally more than a dozen fishing rods on bigger models, chart tubes, large fuel tanks, tackle drawers, toe rails for leaning over the gunwale to gaff fish, and navigation stations. In short, here were all the



The 24-foot Offshore Pro 24s were introduced in 1984 and were marketed to hard-nosed sportfishermen.

features and amenities that hardcore offshore saltwater fishermen and tournament participants dream about.

All of these innovations came about as a direct result of hours, days, weeks spent fishing as a Grady-White team and with customers and other critics (read: the media). Virtually everybody at Grady-White toted a notebook on these expeditions. Field notes, plus recollections of late night re-hashing of the day’s events, added to the increasing body of knowledge. Experience is, indeed, the best teacher.

It wasn’t an easy transition for the older members of the engineering and sales teams. These were men who weren’t necessarily chauvinistic, but they came from a tradition of all-male outings. Wife’s giving birth? ‘Call me on the radio and tell me what it is, boy or girl.’ They weren’t really that diffident, but you get the picture. With the Boomers, however, the times they were a-changin’, indeed.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN: INTEGRITY

As the company grew and the vision now focused on offshore fishing, there was one potentially disastrous glitch that could have torpedoed the corporate ship. But it didn't. In retrospect, it couldn't have. Not with this management team, not with this hard working, determined crew. The year was 1985. Eddie and Wiley once again were walking the aisles at McCormick Place during IMTEC, the Chicago Boat Show. Perhaps they dreamed of another epiphany, such as the one that had brought forth the *204-C* walkaround. Instead, what they heard on the first Monday of the show was a potential nightmare.

Back in Greenville, Doug Gomes was making rounds of a different sort, strolling through the lines of boats under construction. One of the workers hailed him. Doug walked over and the man showed him a fiberglass overlay that easily could be pulled from the wood. Doug nearly stopped breathing. He quickly checked other transoms and found the same problem.

"Turned out," he says, "the glass on product that had been laminated the previous Friday and

finished on Monday, wasn't sticking. The secondary bond was too hard and wasn't taking shape. We knew there was a set amount of boats on which we had used this particular resin...because we did trace it down to the resin, supplied at that time by Owens Corning."

When Doug contacted the incredulous duo, their response was immediate and definitive. Grady-White will do what is right and honorable, Doug was told. It was exactly the response he expected.

Nobody was more surprised that Owens Corning, the world leader in fiberglass technology. They, too, were incredulous, and meetings ensued.

Kris Carroll by then had been assigned the position of engineering manager and also administered Grady-White's insurance. "Certainly our integrity was put to the test in 1985," she remembers. "I was very involved in the negotiations."

Owens Corning ultimately stepped up to the plate and admitted culpability. But what stunned the industry and Grady-White's customers, was Grady-White's swift action to make restitution to buyers.

Grady-White staff fanned out across the nation, attempting to contact affected customers in person.

Doug Gomes recalls, "We knew there was a set amount of products that we had that we used this



In 1985 a plant craftsman hailed Doug Gomes to show him a problem that was to test the company's integrity. True to long-standing values and principles, the company did what was right for the customers.

resin on. We didn't know what owner response was going to be. We had never gotten a call from any customer, but we checked 400 boats and we replaced the boats that had to be replaced. A lot of this was taking place before we had a commitment from Owens Corning to step up and do what they needed to do, which eventually they did. This showed me a lot about Eddie and the integrity of the company.

"I went out in the field with a truck and an air compressor so I could do a little test on the boats and I remember going to Long Island and



Hand lamination ensures the strongest hull and best ratio of resin to fiberglass.

going up to a lawyer's house. I was getting ready to check his boat and he asked, 'What's going to happen if you find that this boat has a bad hull?' and I said, we're going to take the boat back and put a new hull under it and ship it back to you, no charge to you. And he looked at me and said, 'You mean I don't have to sue you?' I said you can do anything you want to do, but this is what we're going to do. He was just flabbergasted. But that showed me and our industry and our consumers and our dealers the type of integrity that Eddie Smith and the company had. And it wasn't like we had financial strength at the time.

"We needed to react really quickly and we did. We went to the public and said we have a problem we want to look at. Nobody called us first. We had a lot of confidence in what we were doing."

"When you're a manufacturer," says Wiley Corbett, "you're going to have your good days and your bad days. And you make your good decisions and your bad decisions, on materials, design, personnel. What you have to hope is that you made mostly good decisions. We had agreed to start using some of Owens Corning's resin. They tested batches at 77 degrees, which is sort of the industry standard. So then we brought in our first tank or two of that stuff, and we started using it and we noticed that the edges started



Integrity means careful inspection by long term employees helps to eliminate problem before they begin.

coming apart. We called Owens Corning in and, bottom line, the stuff was bad. But nobody could duplicate the problem. Finally, they did duplicate it. When they did their test at 90 degrees the material would delaminate. It just wouldn't latch on. It wasn't a problem when you lay up continuously, but it was when you laid up half one day and then half the next day. So we went out and checked boats in the field, and brought some boats back, changed a bunch of hulls, and 150 or so boats were affected."

Longtime employee Kirby Pollard remembers, "We had an on-site crushing crew come in with bulldozers and motor graders and just shred these hulls and haul them off on dump trucks. It was a bad thing, but we did the right thing and we were heroes in the end. Stepping up to the plate and taking the responsibility to do what was right."

Down the docks and across state lines, word spread. Grady-White is a stand-up company. They do what is right.



In the early and mid 1980s, Grady-White built almost every model in a version for OMC Sea Drive power, because it facilitated fishing.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN: NEW DRIVE

Technology was propelling a lot of innovation throughout the industry. One of the most important advances was the introduction of Loran-C. In today's world of pinpoint GPS accuracy it seems quaint, but Loran with all its technical difficulties (if you were on the fringes of the triangulation, the readings could be a little wacky) made going offshore not only possible, but practical. No longer did the mariner (or the angler in this case) have to rely on deduced, or "DED" reckoning to find his way out and back to port. The small boat owner who owned a sextant was about as rare as wahoo in a freshwater lake.

Another new wrinkle was the OMC Sea Drive, circa 1982. Wiley and Eddie had immediately brought out a 22 with that power in mind.

"The design of our product was tied right in with that thing," Wiley says. "But this was short-lived because although the idea was great, with the Sea Drives you couldn't replace the engines. You were locked in. Plus, OMC didn't make a great engine, either. So everybody went to brackets and they dropped the Sea Drive. And our boats were ready for the brackets."

A Sea Drive, while expensive compared to a regular outboard, was easy to gear up and install on stern drive tooling, and had all of the advantages of the later bracket "Grady Drive." It allowed Wiley and the Grady-White team to introduce new models with minimal expense for re-tooling. It fell into place with Wiley's dictum that more models meant more sales.

Putting outboard engines on brackets seemed to make sense for several reasons. For openers, there is more room in the cockpit for fishermen to doesy-doe around each other when the action gets hot. You can re-power easily, which you could not do with the Sea Drive. Also, the set-up is quieter (this was before today's super-quiet four stroke engines), and offers more freeboard at the transom, meaning you're less likely to have a wave dumped in your lap when backing down on a fish or are turned sideways to the sea. The downside is, with all that metal sticking astern, you have to learn to swing the boat to one side or the other when bringing a fish to the boat.

That said, for many fishermen the positive aspects of the bracket system far outweighed

any negatives, and the bracket became, and remains, popular with a segment of the fishing population. In 1986 Grady-White branded its own system Grady Drive.

Although it was not the first boat to be equipped with a Grady Drive outboard bracket, the 9'3" beam amidships 232 *Gulfstream*, introduced in the 1987 model year, was the boat most clearly advantaged. (In the 1986 model year all Grady-White models, except the outboard-only 20-foot center console 20 *Fisherman*, were available with either OMC Sea Drive or the newly branded Grady Drive bracket.)

The added “boat length” provided by the bracket combined with the wide body beam (wider even than Grady’s 24-footers and nearly

as wide as the 9'6" beam 25-foot *Trophy Pro* and *Sailfish*) meant that the *Gulfstream* had a real big-boat feel and performance. It literally could handle big water and offshore fishing just as well as many much larger boats. Because of its 23-foot size and the fact that it was available with either a single outboard (the 232*G*) or twins (the 232*GT*), this model gave dealers a lot of flexibility in pricing. And consumers loved the boat.

From its introductory year in 1986, the 232 *Gulfstream* was available with a head, comfortable seating and two bunks (one a fold-down), an optional hardtop with rocket launcher rod holders plus all the fishing capability of the *Offshore Pro* 24-footer and Grady-White’s other hard-core fishboats. Bottom line, almost from



In 1986, Grady-White introduced the Grady Drive outboard bracket, allowing boater to not only re-power easily but also to use reliable outboard power instead of Sea Drives and get many of the same advantages offshore. This is the popular 232 Gulfstream.



Grady-White didn't necessarily invent the bracket for outboards, or hardtops or walkarounds, but the company was superb at developing and fine-tuning great ideas.

the beginning, the *Gulfstream* had it all, family and fishing, and the model really came into its own with the 1992 advent of the magnificent SeaV² hull ride in Grady-Whites this size. By the 1995 model year, the *Gulfstream* was available only with the bracket (still with either twins or a single) and in 2009, 23 years later, it continues to be a phenomenal success story and a great value.

Eddie Smith comments, "I don't think I want to say we invented, say, hardtops. I don't think anybody ever invented anything. We helped popularize a lot of things, like the Grady Drive. We didn't invent that. The first one I saw was on the back of an old Drummond over at Treasure

Cay in the Bahamas. The stern drive had 'kicked' and the guy had filled in the transom and made himself a bracket on the back and he was really inventive. I took a bunch of pictures of it and David Neese said, 'Someday, people will be attaching engines like that.'

"So, we popularized things like that and the walkaround, but I don't claim to have invented any of that stuff. I think we definitely popularized hardtops on small boats. I don't think anything is absolutely, positively new."

Grady-White's evolution accelerated. The drift toward an all-fishing fleet became a stampede.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN: INTERNAL ASSETS

1987 was another watershed year for Grady-White. In the fall, Eddie Smith decided to implement a new corporate plan that he had been contemplating for a long time. He stepped aside as president, naming Wiley Corbett to that post, and soon elevated Kris Carroll, Doug Gomes, and Edgar Bryan to vice presidencies. Frank Longino also came aboard full time in 1987 as marketing manager. In this reorganization, Eddie set a path to make sure that the sum of the parts of his company created something greater than what might otherwise have been. In other words, he wanted to cover all the facets of Grady-White's business—manufacturing, engineering, purchasing, sales and marketing—with individuals whose expertise he knew and trusted to be better than his own or Wiley's. People who had highly specialized skills and offered enormous talents would eventually create a Grady-White that was far better than a Grady-White led primarily by two individuals.

Eddie says, "I realized that we needed more professional management, a different type of management. We were moving into a

different size company. You no longer could manage with one or two people from the top. We'd be at the mercy of managers. This business needed a different type of management, so I stepped down from a real active day-to-day role, especially in the sales and marketing area. I made Wiley president, because he'd been executive vice president and he earned this opportunity. So he served as president until his retirement in 1993, and I brought Frank Longino in to handle marketing. Linda Daniels, who had been in sales since my family's involvement, moved up to in-house sales manager for a couple of years. At the same time, Jim Stoneman wanted to go out on the road, so he became Florida sales representative."

In 1987, Frank Longino left the ad agency he had helped found and came on board at Grady-White as a fulltime employee. At the agency, Frank had been doing much of the Grady-White marketing and advertising work, and Eddie recognized that his company had grown to where they needed somebody inside full time. Frank weighed his options, and came to believe that the brand planning and marketing oversight manager at Grady-White was going to be he or somebody else, and if it was somebody else he might lose the opportunity to work with the



The core of the executive team that came about in Eddie's reorganization in 1987 are still associated with the company today. (front row, l-r) David Neese, Mark Doggett, Shelley Tubaugh, Jill Carraway, Joey Weller (middle row, l-r) Eddie Smith, Kris Carroll, Wiley Corbett (back row, l-r) Edgar Bryan, Doug Gomes

business and with the products he enjoyed. This took place in the fall of 1987 when Wiley was president, Doug Gomes ran the plant, and Kris was running engineering.

There were three more important new hires in the 1980s. Jill Carraway came aboard as an industrial engineer in 1984; Joey Weller joined the Grady-White team in January 1988; and Shelley Tubaugh was hired a few months later in November 1988. All of these folks proved to have strong talents and be highly flexible in their leadership roles at the company. All eventually became vice presidents.

Jill Carraway has easily worn a lot of hats at Grady-White over the years. In some measure, her greatest value to the company has resulted from the fact that she is a talented generalist and has skillfully contributed to the company in a wide range of disciplines from technical, to accounting to general management. Jill joined Grady-White about the time that the company was building a near-peak 26 models and at the same time coming out with a revamped new 1985 model year *204 Fisherman* center console and an all new 24-foot *249 Fisherman* center console. With all that going on, and as Grady-White



Jill Carraway meets with Team Trainer Sandy Weathersbee and Accounting Manager Billie Brooks. Jill is currently vice president of administration.

was setting record numbers of unit sales, there was plenty of work for an industrial engineer, including time measurement and time and task management. Over the next six years, she came to know many of the people around the plant who made day-to-day manufacturing tick. In 1990, Jill transferred to product engineering to help David Neese with prototyping new models, an activity and job she also enjoyed very much. In 1997, she moved again to lead human resources as manager and director until she was named vice president of the department in 2003. Jill was eventually named vice president of administration and continues to make important contributions in that job, taking over most of the duties in accounting, purchasing and insurance management that Edgar Bryan handled prior to his retirement in 2006.

Joey Weller was originally from New Bern, North Carolina, and in one of his first jobs out of school worked near that town learning quality assurance at an around-the-clock production facility, and eventually became superintendent of production there. He gained valuable experience, but the hours were horrific for a newlywed. Joey's family moved to Williamston, a small eastern North Carolina town not far from the Grady-White plant in Greenville, where he could be near his ailing mother. One day, as he drove



Joey's technical background and his work in manufacturing helped him greatly when he moved to handling publicity under Frank Longino.

by the Grady-White plant, he said to himself, "Here's a good quality boat company. I want to be a part of it."

"I came here in 1988," Joey says. "When I walked in the door it was supposed to be a quality assurance job, but Doug Gomes grabbed me and put me in manufacturing."

Joey started as an assistant supervisor in small parts and fabrication, making fishbox and storage box lids and such. Six months later, he was supervisor of the department. Joey transferred to hulls in 1989 and later worked decks and after that coordinated assembly. People around the plant enjoyed Joey's quick smile, and Joey stayed in manufacturing for almost seven years, learning a great deal about the technical aspects of boats and boatbuilding. His broad exposure to the company's inner workings, his technical knowledge about Grady-White boats and his sunny personality made him a perfect candidate



Dealer meetings were an opportunity for camaraderie as well as business. Here are dealer on the way to a function in the 1980s.

when Grady-White expanded its customer relations department, and in January 1997 he became manager of customer relations under Frank Longino. Joey also began helping Frank with the management of public relations for Grady-White, and he worked well with magazine writers in generating publicity for Grady-White. Partly as a result, Joey moved to sales and was named marketing and customer relations manager in 1999, and was named director of sales and marketing in October 2005. He was eventually named vice president in December 2007.

In 1988, Grady-White was also upping the focus and rapidly building what was to become the boating industry's strongest customer service department. As a part of that effort late in that year, the company hired an engaging young woman from Oregon who had begun her masters in business administration at ECU (she completed that degree in 1991 while working at Grady-White). Shelley Tubaugh moved to a position as customer service administrator and was an integral part of building that department into the best in the business. Four years later, not too long after Doug Gomes had moved from manufacturing to sales, Doug was given the responsibility to focus on building and grooming the dealer organization. After a short cross training stint in manufacturing (almost every Grady-White

executive has some experience in manufacturing), Shelley moved from customer service to become sales coordinator under Doug. Her gift was creating great partnerships with dealers and continuously improving dealer relationships while ensuring that Grady-White had happy boat dealers (not always an easy task). She excelled at the duty, and worked in that capacity for almost 12 years. She was a key ingredient in Doug's success in implementing a measurable system of gauging customer satisfaction with dealers. This measurement, along with retail sales success, was instrumental in motivating dealers and in spawning Grady-White's highly coveted Admiral's Circle and Service Excellence Awards. Shelley demonstrated her flexibility as a leader when she moved to purchasing in 2005 and later as she moved to human resources. Shelley was named vice president of human resources in 2007.



Along with Doug Gomes, Shelley Tubaugh was instrumental in dealer development, customer satisfaction measurement and later in human resources.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN: THE DEALERS

One of the sturdiest rungs in Grady-White's climb to the top has been its strong, dedicated network of dealers. Eddie Smith's initiation into the realm of, and importance of, good dealers was that long-ago meeting with Jack Kent when he and Bing Fishman sat on an old school bus seat and made their pitch. Since then, through a patient, studied process of development, education, sometimes by cajoling, and winnowing, the Grady-White dealer organization became arguably the finest in the industry.

Eddie Smith says, "The other piece that goes with the team at Grady-White is our dealership

network. Over time we've built a team of dealers that are, without a doubt, the best dealer organization, the most loyal, dedicated and probably most successful in our industry. When I stand up in our dealer meetings and look out over that crowd, I'm talking to dealerships that I've been talking to in many cases for 35-plus years, and in many cases I'm talking to the second generation and in at least three or four cases, the third or fourth generation.

"Our internal team and external team—the dealers—are our greatest assets and neither show on the balance sheet. People over the years have



From the beginning, Grady-White dealers have been one of the strengths of the company. Here's in-water boat testing at a late 1980s meeting.

been copying our boats, but that was the wrong thing to mirror. They should have been copying our organization, and that's something that you can't copy. You have to create it. I've seen new companies start up and they don't have a dealer organization. When a friend of mine bought an existing boat company, he had good boats and a good team of people there, but he had no distribution. He called me one day in a panic, and I told him it was going to take time. It took us 15 or 20 years to get the right dealers in place and to treat them well and have them completely buy into our total customer satisfaction. That's something you can't create in a short period of time."

The Grady-White company and the distribution system matured in the 1980s. Many of the dealerships at the time were mom and pop operations, and the Grady-White management team realized there were just too many. In some cases they were too close together to make any money because they were cutting prices, fighting against each other. In the late 1980s, Philadelphia alone had six Grady-White dealerships. Over a long period of time into the early 1990s, dealers who showed promise made the grade. The decisions were sometimes tough. But the process built a dealership network that is the envy of the industry.



Eddie, Wiley and Jim Stoneman at a business meeting with dealers in the early 1980s.

Eddie Smith also made the critical decision that his company was not going to expand at the rate that dealers wanted. During the late '80s when everything was all go-go, and OMC was buying up companies and Brunswick was buying up companies, Grady-White in contrast to most of the industry decided not to get larger. Instead, the company came up with an allocation program.

There's nothing in business school that proposes utilizing an allocation program that keeps a successful boat dealer happy when times are booming. Everything in marketing is focused on how to sell more. Grady-White's allocation program, however unprecedented and perhaps unwelcome with some dealers, turned out to be a smart strategic move.

Doug Gomes comments, "I think there were two defining moments that I saw in our product evolution. One had to do with the quality issue—we had the integrity behind it—and the other one was how we reacted when the market was just off the

wall. It would have been easy for us to follow the path of saying, let's hire two shifts of people, let's go ahead and make it while we can, and put the product out there. But the fact is, this probably would have involved sacrificing some quality. You can't put that many people on that quickly and produce what needs to be done in a quality fashion.

"As a result, we knew we wouldn't be able to meet market demand, and yet we wanted to be fair to our dealers, large and small. So we began a program that allowed them to be treated equally, based on their last three years of buying, and gave them a set number of products that they could count on and anything we had above and beyond that would go to a pool that they could pull from.

"This gave the dealers an understanding of what they could expect for that model year. We didn't chase and produce everything that we could, but we were very up-front with our dealers to say this is what our program is. By and large they were very appreciative, and I think that at the end of the year most of them got the product they needed as they drew from the pool. We got a lot of publicity on the program because it was unknown at that time for somebody not to chase everything they could do to make a profit."

In 1988 and 1989, Grady-White had built a record number of boats. The conventional wisdom of that booming era was that boating's up-and-down cycles might be a thing of the past, that, ideally, a boat builder should grow by 10% each year in terms of number of units. That thinking became a part of Grady-White's strategic plan. However, as the luxury tax kicked in 1990 and Desert Shield and Desert Storm hit the headlines, all three things negatively affected sales across the industry. But thanks to the dealer development program and the continuing lineup of popular product like the *28 Marlin*, Grady-White dealers were exceptionally strong, so strong that they had banked some cash and they were able to survive. Grady-White had some cash, as well, and the strategy became to introduce new and even better products, when things slowed up.

The crucial lesson that Grady-White learned at that time was that they could improve company financial health through improving quality, reliability and customer perception of value without building an arbitrary number of boats. In other words, the company could do very, very well while building fewer boats than they did in those "record number" years.



Kids, families, friends, big smiles and lots of winners! All the earmarks of a Grady-White owners' tournament!

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN: THE ART OF CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

The 1980s began a cycle of “really healthy years” as Kris Carroll says. “There was a big decision when we decided to focus only on saltwater fishing and get away from trying to make our runabouts and ski boats. We made the right call to not continue to try to be all things to all people.”

During the critical period of the early 1980s, Wiley, Eddie and others in Grady-White management learned the real meaning of quality, reliability and durability in customer perception of value. Through their work and learning from reading business development specialists, Grady-White managers came to understand that producer companies can either be a “low cost producer,” or a “leading edge technology

producer,” or a “customer intimate” producer. If the company chooses to go low cost, the company needs to go really big volume in order to drive costs down and achieve that strategy. If a company chooses to be “leading edge technology,” the tendency is that the products are going to have some errors, some “bugs” along the way—and the company must have customers who are accepting of those occasional “bugs.” If a business chooses to be “customer intimate,” that business must produce a product that is really high quality and is very reliable and makes customers very happy. Businesses can and do, of course, have some elements of each kind of producer, but overall, as a way to run a business, managers must make a choice. Very early on, in all likelihood in part due to his own perfectionist personality, Eddie Smith chose the high quality, happy customer route. He aimed almost from the beginning for Grady-White to be “customer-intimate.”

Kris Carroll explains, “Now, you have to acknowledge the other styles to some degree, but we’re customer-intimate. That means staying close, watching and making improvements and changes carefully considering what we’ve learned from



In the late 1980s Eddie and Wiley made the difficult but conscious decision not to expand production so as to enhance quality and satisfaction.

our customers. Our customers want something that's proven. They don't want us trying out new things on them. Other manufacturers, whose customer base is always looking for the latest and greatest, don't mind going through the bugs and all that.

"1985, '86, '87, '88...all of a sudden, it was a real hot market. We were selling a lot of boats. Everybody wants to go back to those days. There were people buying BMWs and our whole society was buying a lot of things and I look at some of the boat buyers we had during that period. Sure, we were happy; we were able to capitalize on our share of that sales surge. People would buy a boat because they could have it—but they weren't all committed boaters, and then you have some fall-away.

"But during that time, we were able to capitalize on our market. That was a blow for freedom. Although we became debt free in the late 1970s, a lot of boat companies never get debt free. So, here we are, we're starting to see certain things that work for us, certain things that we want to do. We love sportfishing. Wiley loved it, Eddie loved it, we all loved going out there and using our product, and we enjoyed that passion, and then you get some money in the coffers because we had some very good sales years, and you get to the point where, you know,

where we had the ability to say 'We don't want to be the biggest, we want to be the best.' At that point we knew we could focus on what we wanted."

Grady-White was in the stage of growth and maturity that enabled the possibility of defining exactly who Grady-White wanted to be. Eddie had already made the decision to be a customer-intimate company, and if that meant limiting growth, then so be it.

"Most people that own their own business want to be bigger," Kris offers. "People are saying, 'Why don't you build your brand, build another plant, and go into other products?' And although we expanded, we were very careful about our expansion. Eddie Smith's desire was to be the best, and that was big enough for him. He had satisfied that need and this satisfied our team. We don't want to be Wonder Bread; we want to be the corner bakery.

"It's not just about creating great products," she goes on. "Eddie Smith just as much wants a well-run company. We are focused on details of satisfying our customers, and we're just as focused on details of running our company. It's a passion. It's the art of doing business. It's the art of satisfying our customers."

It's what has made the company successful in boom time and downturns.



In the late 1980s, as management changes took place, a greater emphasis on team building began at Grady-White. This is a late 1980s Grady-White supervisors' outing to Harkers Island for fishing, fun and idea exchange.

CHAPTER NINETEEN: A SEA OF CHANGE

Sometime in the late 1980s, Wiley Corbett decided he was going to retire in 1993 and planning for that event began. As a part of the plan, in 1990 Wiley named Kris Carroll vice president of engineering and manufacturing, Doug Gomes moved to vice president of sales, and Frank Longino was promoted to vice president of marketing.

As further evidence that Grady-White well understood the importance of quality to the future of the company, Kris hired Mark Doggett as a quality assurance manager in 1990. Mark had earned a Master's Degree in Industrial Technology and was an experienced quality engineer. He soon gained oversight of all the product quality at Grady-White. In 1992, Mark began to manage all of Grady-White's production and manufacturing processes first as manager and later director. Mark was named vice president of manufacturing for the company in 2002.

Also in 1992, Kris Carroll was promoted to executive vice president and general manager. Her role was expanded so that her collaborative energy and teambuilding talents could focus on a wider arena, including not just engineering

and manufacturing but sales and marketing, too. And, as Eddie expected, Kris proved quite capable of managing all aspects of the company. A year afterward, when Wiley retired, Eddie Smith did not hesitate to promote her to the top spot. Some in the industry were surprised. Many, especially those who knew something about the situation, were not. Eddie had always looked internally for talent to promote and once again, as he had in 1987, he understood the talents that his company needed and he drew from what he knew.

Shortly after her promotion, Eddie took her to IMTEC in Chicago and at the big, gala NMMA dinner party, he walked her around and



Mark Doggett's team: (l-r) Compliance Manager Jim Hardin, Fabrication Production Manager Dale Brantley, Assembly Production Manager Brenda Wilson, and Vice President of Manufacturing Mark Doggett

introduced her as the new president of Grady-White. One of the guests, a man noted for not mincing words, listened as Eddie said, “I’d like you to meet the new president of Grady-White.”

The man looked at Eddie. Glanced down at Kris, and then looked up at Eddie again.

All the man said was, “You’re ‘kidding’ me.” (“Kidding” was not the word he actually used.)

Clearly, Eddie was not “kidding” him.

Eddie had long since realized that Grady-White had entered a time in its evolution when teambuilding could make a huge contribution; this was without a doubt the way to continue to make the sum of the parts greater than the whole. Kris offered talents that were vital to move the company to the next level. Here was an enthusiastic, energetic, bottom-up type manager whose specialty was engaging all the players, and here was the opportunity to take Kris’s naturally methodical approach to business development and business planning. Kris offered the company the opportunity to grow and prosper through inspiring teambuilding among all the players, including all the associates, the internal management at Grady-White, as well as the dealer network and even associated vendors. And best of all, she realized the growing importance of developing more structured tools and methods of customer input.

“Kris is the definition of a great leader,” Eddie says. “She is the best leader of people I’ve ever been around and I’ve been among a lot of the Fortune 500. She will take people from all over the Grady-White organization, some who think they’ve reached the top of their career, and she will engage them, urge them to continue to improve, and encourage them to read inspiring books. She will send them to seminars and help them grow beyond what they ever dreamed. Most of our executives today worked in manufacturing and came up through the business. Kris led the creation of our associate development programs, which provide opportunity for all to become healthy, productive people through classes, cross training, and especially reading. She gets people engaged in many things that help them in being the best they can be.

“She is absolutely amazing as a consensus builder,” Eddie confirms. “Wiley and I—and Wiley would admit this—our management style was 180 degrees from Kris’s. We were dictatorial. It was our way or the highway, and we were in a hurry. We were trying to turn a company around and build, and we didn’t think we had time to be nice about it or ask people’s opinions. We just thought we knew what needed to be done, and we sent down directives from on high, so it was a very top-down management pyramid. Kris has turned the pyramid upside down. She engages all the people here on



In 1993, Wiley Corbett retired and Kris Carroll took over as president, becoming the first woman ever to hold such a position for a major manufacturer. Here is Kris on a fishing trip along with Eddie and Chris Smith.

every level, gets them involved in building the product, designing the product, doing away with waste, improving our efficiency. She helped create a wonderful suggestion system here at Grady-White where we pay people good money to implement ideas that help us become better and more successful.”

Kris initially had some concern that she didn’t fit the “macho” side of the hardcore fishing brand image. She *was* the first female president of a major boat company who was not an owner of the company. But as it turned out, she was accepted by Grady-White’s heavily male customer base and she became very respected in the male-dominated industry, including being named almost immediately to the NMMA board.

Eddie Smith says, “Kris was a sea change. She really took us to the next level, in terms

of moving the company forward with terrific strategic planning, setting our missions, setting our goals, outlining the strategies to accomplish those goals, identifying the people who would be needed to do that. My role now is just trying to stay out of their way. The present management team is right for today; they clearly know better than Wiley and I could ever have what it takes for Grady-White to be successful at this point in our company’s history and in these times. We have a lot of visitors from other boat companies, and from other kinds of companies, who come and see our efficiency and how we do business. Grady-White is clearly envied for how we run our business. Thanks to today’s management team, we are the benchmark. We are recognized by many as ‘best in class.’”

CHAPTER TWENTY: THE SEAV²® HULL

In one of his last great hurrahs prior to retirement, Wiley Corbett greatly influenced the future. In 1987, he and Eddie decided that Grady-White needed a bigger boat. Wiley and the engineering team, now including Kris and David Neese, worked with the famous New England naval architecture firm of C. Raymond Hunt Associates, the same firm that had designed the now legendary *Bertram 31*, one of the great sea boats of all time.

Wiley and his crew worked on the design and the tooling and came up with a 28-footer that he proclaimed to be “...pretty good.” This was the *28 Marlin*.

“In 1992,” Wiley goes on, “I got together with our engineering team and our sales staff and I said, ‘I think this is what we need to do. We need to make all our boats ride like this 28.’ Everybody agreed, so Hunt made new hulls



With its breakthrough SeaV² hull, that created a ride that quite simply blew away the competition even in quartering seas, the 28 Marlin was perhaps the most important new boat of the late '80s. The SeaV² hull was eventually a design feature of every Grady-White.



The 1989 catalog celebrated the company's 30th year in business. The cover that year featured Eddie Smith aboard a 1960 model year Pamlico waving at his son Chris aboard a 1989 model year Marlin 28. The heritage of solidly-built craftsmanship is clear.

and we put them on every boat except the 204-C. We made them all ride like the 28. I told Frank Longino that we needed a name for this hull.”

Frank came up with “SeaV²,” a name that accurately indicated that the design exponentially improved the boat’s ride and the way the hull worked. Almost immediately, SeaV² became a successful and very well received name for Grady-White’s new hulls.

Interestingly, the 28 *Marlin* later became the 30 *Marlin* without growing an inch. The 1989 28 *Marlin* also introduced the European-style “integrated transom” (soon to be a Grady-White signature design) that added approximately two feet of space to the boat but no additional running bottom, meaning that the LOA (length

overall) was actually 30'6" and only the running bottom was 28'. Grady-White was reluctant to call the boat a 30 because of the running bottom length. Marketing realities being what they are, the 28 *Marlin* was being compared to other boats of 28 feet by many potential buyers, and since it was actually longer cost considerably more than most 28s. By 1994, marketing and sales minds prevailed over engineering (a rarity), and the names of all Grady-Whites today are named after the LOA, minus any bow extensions.

The SeaV² hull was a breakthrough, literally. It created a ride that sliced through rough water, among other advantages. Grady-White SeaV² hulls were so much better than anything else in the line and, length for length, far better than



As the “Baby Boom” generation began to have kids, Grady-White designers were busy adapting products that had not only superb fishboat features but also real creature comforts. The 28 Marlin was a industry breakthrough in that respect, and conceptually led the way for Grady-White.

anything else that was out there. Research had indicated that the Grady-White line could improve the rough ride in big water. So, in the 1992 model year, Grady-White changed half of the running bottoms (24 feet and above), and in 1993 they changed the rest of the running bottoms except for the *17 Spirit*. The move effectively gave Grady-White models the tremendous advantage of being the best riding boat versus any competitor.

The phenomenal success of the hull lay in its architecture. It had a “variable deadrise.” Engineering guru Wiley Corbett explains, “In the old wood-built days, all boats had two flat planes at the back, and when you got to the front of the boat they’d take it up to the bow. That was the way everybody made hulls in the ’60s and ’70s. The problem with that design is, as you accelerate a flat boat, you’re dealing with the attraction to the water—the suction. And if you get the bow up a little bit too much, it will start to porpoise on you, releasing and grabbing back. Now, Bruce Collier’s design put a wedge at the back to about the center of the boat, and

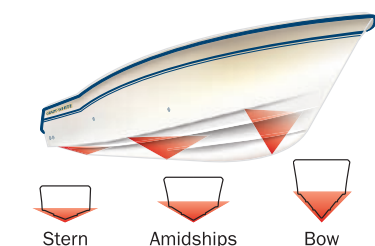


Today, 20 years after the SeaV² design was introduced, this exclusive Grady-White hull design still provides the best ride in boating. Notice the indication of the SeaV² hull: three distinct wakes coming off the hull. This is the 2009 290 Chesapeake.

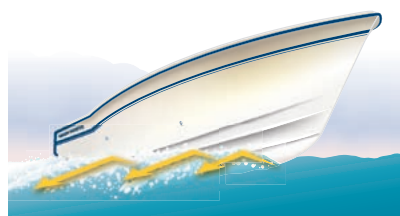
from there it sort of rolled on up. This didn’t tend to porpoise because he’d gotten rid of a lot of the flat. But, the SeaV² rise started at the transom, where you have your vee, and every foot forward the angle improves. You have no flats. When you get to about where you’re sitting in the boat, the angle is about ten degrees sharper. And when you have that sharper ten degrees, when you hit a wave the boat will ride better.”

Grady-White’s customers approved. The whole industry approved. Grady-White hulls went from famous (for strength) to legendary (comfort added).

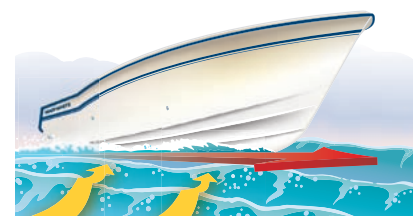
There were other things afoot in the industry, as well. Changes in technology were one thing. Changes in marketing approaches were another.



Like a series of sea-cutting wedges



Strakes and chines knock down spray.



Tracks in quartering seas

Sailfish 282
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The Yamaha/Grady-White partnership began early on and was important to both companies. Both keyed on messages like this about safety, performance and reliability.

PART THREE:

ENGINEERING THE ULTIMATE IN CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE: A POWER CHANGE

In 1990, another key growth was sparked when Eddie Smith and Ham Hamberger of Yamaha Motors sat in a hotel room and hammered out the first OEM outboard engine agreement.

Prior to the mid 1980s, the dominating engine builders were OMC and Mercury. The ever-clever Japanese, however, were about to alter the way business was done. The marketing and engineering mavens at Yamaha studied the market and devised a multi-pronged approach to drive a wedge into it.

Wiley Corbett recounts, “Yamaha came over here and talked to everybody and they went back and developed an engine and...the thing would run! Right out of the box, it would run.

“In the late 1980s, manufacturers sold engines through retail boat dealers. The dealers were putting them on whatever boat they had in their line. You might have a Bayliner, a Sea Ray, whatever. Then Mercury (Brunswick) bought Bayliner, and then they bought Sea Ray. So now the only engines on those boats were Mercurys. In

the past, they might have been getting Johnsons and Evinrudes. Then, OMC started buying boat companies and of course they installed Johnsons and Evinrudes on the transoms of the boats built by the companies they owned.”

Wiley continues, “Eddie Smith had a great idea. In 1990, in that meeting with Ham, in a groundbreaking decision, Yamaha signed the OEM agreement with Grady-White and agreed to start selling direct to the manufacturers.



By 1995, Grady-White was providing factory pre-rigging for all of the major brands of outboards. It is simpler and far more efficient to install instruments and accessories as the boat is being built.

OMC and Mercury just couldn't believe anybody would do that. So, we at Grady-White started packaging pre-rigging for all outboards, and selling Yamahas through our dealers." This was a new way for an outboard company to do business, and in light of how Yamaha competitors Brunswick and OMC had been buying boatbuilding companies that then used their respective engine brands, it was great for Grady-White and also for Yamaha. A lot of the changes came from Grady-White pushing for them. Grady-White was, and is, an incredibly important customer to Yamaha.

By the mid-1990s, Grady-White had begun pre-rigging for all major brands of outboards and

that concerned some dealers for a while because they considered rigging outboards on a fishing boat to be an art form, a signature skill, and the style of rigging was a competitive advantage versus other dealerships. They felt that dealership rigging was thus a selling point for them and the Grady-White brand.

Nevertheless, factory pre-rigging had quite a few advantages: it was standardized so repairs were easier, it was much simpler and more practical to install instrumentation and accessories as the boat was being built. Power and controls were properly matched to the boat, testing was better and more thorough, and perhaps most importantly the engine and



As Grady-White integrated the "Euro transom" and SeaV² hull throughout the line, the company moved more and more to outboard power, thanks to continuing advances in power, reliability and customer satisfaction, especially from Yamaha.



As the 1990s progressed, Grady-White offered fewer boats with a stern drive option. The last model with this option was the 274 Sailfish, introduced in 1998; the stern drive option was discontinued in 2002.

installation were covered by factory warranty.

Grady-White was careful to offer pre-rigging for all the important outboard brands of the era, Mercury, Johnson, Evinrude and Yamaha.

Kris Carroll says, “In the early days, and even later into the ’70s and ’80s, Grady-White was very much both a stern drive and outboard power builder. But the truth is we were willing to try to power our boats with whatever our customers wanted. In fact, we even offered an inboard in 1981, and even today some customers ask about inboards, especially diesel inboards. But we found that for us inboards created a lot of what we considered to be unnecessary new work, and redirected our focus from stern drives

and outboards that we had learned to incorporate so well. So, our inboard experiment was not a resounding success, and we continued to focus on other power options.

“We went through the OMC Sea Drive phase in 1981 and 1982, and discovered after a few years that the Sea Drive power option had some drawbacks. It was pricey, not easy to replace like an outboard, and not as reliable as we would have liked. So, during the 1990s, we began to get very focused on outboard power, because that’s what most of our customers wanted. And by that time, we were really and truly beginning to focus on and define our niche through customer feedback.”

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO: '90s STYLING

Grady-White got back in the dual console business in a bigger way in 1990 with the re-introduction of the 22-foot *22 Tournament*, after a three-year hiatus of that length of dual console from the lineup. Surprisingly to some at the time, the boat was introduced as an outboard-only, bracket-only design named the *225G Tournament*. The *225G* was the first outboard-only Grady-White since the 1984 introduction of the center console *204 Fisherman*; that boat came only with a transom mounted outboard.

As a departure from the “one design, three models” tradition at Grady-White, the *225G* may well have anticipated both Wiley’s retirement—which came three years later—and Grady-White’s move to an outboard models-only lineup in 1994.

Although the *225G* was Grady-White’s first (but not the last) bracket-only boat, the company’s introduction of another dual console was nothing new. Over the years, Grady-White has built open-bow dual consoles as a mainstay in so many incarnations—from simple vinyl-lined bowrider runabouts like the early 1970s 18-footer *Adventurer* and *Rogue*, to the tough,

self bailing fiberglass-lined 19-foot “Vee-Lifts for the 1980s,” the *190 Tarpon*, *195 Sportsman*, *196 Atlantic* and *197 Bluefish*. There was even a 24-foot *24 Tournament* hardcore fishboat in the mid 1980s. With the later introduction of very comfortable seating and the seemingly impossible yet ingenious incorporation of a head in the 2003 big-selling *225 Tournament*, followed by the highly touted and successful “ultimate coastal family boat” *275 Tournament* and introduction of a 30-foot dual console *307 Tournament* for 2009 for the 50th Anniversary year, the design has grown and matured along with the company.

Grady-White is recognized as the walkaround pioneer the world over, yet the advancement and completeness of its center console line is certainly of note. It has been hailed for the breakthrough express models, but of all the designs—dual console, walkaround, center console and express—dual consoles have been around the longest. From the runabout tri-hull bowrider called the *Capri* that was being built in fiberglass the day Eddie walked in the door in 1968, to the 30-foot *307 Tournament*, the

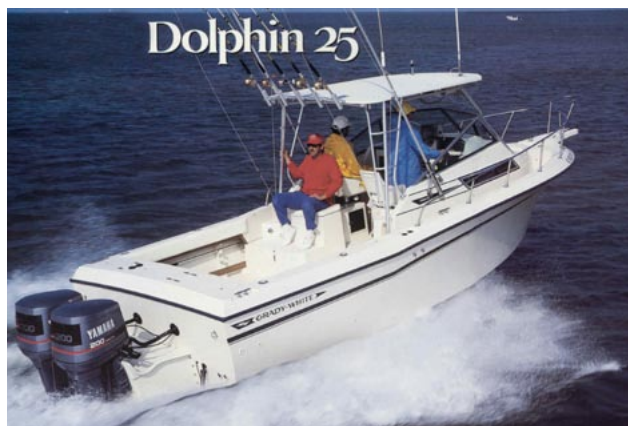


Grady-White is acclaimed for walkarounds, and since the 1990s has offered the industry's most complete selection of center consoles, yet the dual consoles have been around the longest. From the 1968 bowrider Capri to the magnificent 2009 307 Tournament, dual consoles have been important to Grady-White.

dual console design has made lots of Grady-White owners happy and has been very valuable for the company.

Walkaround cabin models continued to evolve as well. In the 1991 model year, Grady-White introduced the *25 Dolphin*, a heavier, even more fish-worthy design update to the 1980s *Trophy Pro 25* series, with more rod holders and fishing features plus—like the *Trophy Pro*—plenty of fuel capacity, insulated ice boxes, fish boxes, tackle shelves and tackle drawers, and a toe rail design to aid in the safe gaffing of fish.

Both models had plenty of space for the newest electronics, and both were made to make long offshore runs and come home with fish boxes full. Each offered heads as an option only, and seating plus sleeping and eating accommodations were utilitarian. The *25 Dolphin*, like the *Trophy Pro* before it, was hardly the best choice for mom and the kids.



The 25 Dolphin was a pinnacle of Grady-White's offshore fishing design and gained an avid following among fish fanatics, yet it was phased out in favor of more family-friendly models.

And the Baby Boomers at the time were raising kids in droves. With the *Dolphin*, Grady-White began to hear a faint but growing chorus from customers and dealers to, yes, build fishing boats, but *family* fishing boats. In other words, move more toward the original concept.

The *25 Dolphin* was available from 1991 until mid-1994 when they were replaced by a much more family-oriented boat, the *272 Sailfish*. Grady-White heard the growing chorus and listened to its customers carefully. Through the 1990s, especially as Kris Carroll began to take the reins as president, the product line was noticeably shifting to a greater family orientation.

During the 1980s under Wiley's productive hand and astute engineering eye and mind, the company had become a premier saltwater fishing brand, arguably better and certainly with more carefully considered fishing detail than any of its competitors.

But, Grady-White also made a miscalculation in 1991. Wiley Corbett explains, "We made a flybridge boat, and that was my idea but maybe not my best one. It wouldn't sell. Back in the '70s and early '80s, Penn Yan had made this little flybridge boat that became very popular. Very successful selling boat. And it was on a 9'3" beam. So, Hunt did the hull for us and it had a great ride. It just wouldn't sell very well. I think we made 42 boats with that design.

“I think what happened was that when Penn Yan did their boat, there were no Lorans. Folks ran up and down the rivers, and people didn’t fish back then. You’d hang a rod out the back, but they weren’t running offshore, because nobody had a way to get out there and get back. Once the Lorans came out in the late 1970s, everybody started running further offshore. So the market changed. And when you got a flybridge offshore, it is not a good deal. Because the driver wants to be down there where the fishing’s going on.”

Nevertheless, the customers who bought the *260 Atlantic* flybridge loved the boat in spite of its drawbacks, and perhaps that’s testimony to the great features the boat offered: the great riding SeaV² hull, the increasingly popular Euro transom with transom door access, plus an incredibly roomy cabin for a 26-footer, with lots of headroom, a big galley and a man-sized head.

In short, the collectively engineered pieces of the project worked, but the concept did not. You can still spot an *Atlantic* out on the water. Like all Grady-Whites it was built tough, built to last.

In 1991, a drop in sales numbers attributed to the advent of Desert Shield and Desert Storm along with the luxury tax and ensuing fight over that tax, prompted Grady-White to bring out a 17-foot center console, the *175 Spirit*, for the 1992 model year in an attempt to drive the



In 1991 Grady-White introduced the flybridge 260 Atlantic. With a huge stand-up cabin full of comfort and a great riding SeaV² hull, it was well loved by its owners but did not gain a significant foothold in the marketplace.

overall numbers up a bit. The boat featured nice aft lift-out storage boxes, along with a bow casting platform with a 104-quart insulated ice or fishbox underneath, an aerated livewell, storage room in the console, plus an optional bench seat with a back. The boat took a maximum of 140 horsepower and was available in outboard only. Because of its size, the *Spirit* was never intended for heavy-duty saltwater use and the hull was a little different from most Grady-White hulls.

The next year, when every other Grady-White model was converted to a SeaV² hull, the *Spirit* was not. The little Grady had staying power nevertheless, at a time when many Grady-White dealers were focused on the brand’s bigger models. Despite having been brought into the line as a stopgap measure, the little *175 Spirit* survived until the 1998 model year when it was superseded



In 1992, the much-loved, well-known 204-C Overnighter became the 208 Adventure as Grady-White converted the 20-foot walkaround and almost every model in the line to the incomparable ride of the SeaV² hull.

by the 18-foot *180 Sportsman*, a terrific new small center console with its big-boat wheel, great features and great riding SeaV² hull.

Another set of new 1992 model year boats was the 24-foot Grady-White *Explorer* series, the *244 Explorer* outboard, *245 Explorer* stern drive, and *246G Explorer* with Grady Drive bracket. The *Explorer* was essentially an update to the *24 Offshore* that Grady-White built in the 1980s, but with added comfort features like deluxe seating in the helm and companion areas and a slightly different cabin arrangement with amenities that included a freshwater sink plus an optional gunwale mounted freshwater system.

The *Explorer* stayed in the lineup for four years until superseded by the *24 Voyager*, a boat with Grady-White's increasingly popular integrated transom with transom door access to the swim ladder, and amenities much more family oriented.

In 1992, as further testimony to Grady-White's emerging strategic partnership with Yamaha and growing interest in its outboard technology, every main product catalog shot depicted a Yamaha outboard engine.

Grady-White in 1993 abandoned one of the storied names (but certainly not the concept or design) that had brought them to the party. The walkaround *204-C Overnighter* became the 20-foot walkaround *208 Adventure* as Grady-White went

to a SeaV² hull in the model. The *Adventure* was outboard powered only.

The design team collaborated on other updates for the 20-footer, completely redesigning the helm station and making a more comfortable cabin, a new anchor locker and even offering a hardtop option. The name *204-C Overnighter* had been in the lineup for 18 years since soon after that fateful day when Wiley and Eddie returned from the boat show in the Windy City. But, there is still a 20-foot walkaround Grady-White right there in the lineup 34 years later.

Grady-White's integrated bracket, first introduced in 1989 on the *28 Marlin*, kept getting more and more popular as the 1990s progressed and as Grady converted nearly all of its hulls to the continuously variable deadrise SeaV² except the *175 Spirit*. With a handsome sleek look, this "Euro-style transom," offered many



The 175 Spirit was a small but popular center console that stayed in the line until 1988 when Grady-White introduced the 180 Sportsman with its big-boat feel and SeaV² hull.

of the advantages of the Grady Drive bracket from a handling and improved ride standpoint, along with the added benefit of transom door access to the cockpit. Furthermore, the style easily lent itself to engineering different types of comfortable transom seating and adding a variety of insulated storage, livewells and insulated fishboxes, not to mention seacock and power/battery access.

The Euro transom was the death knell of Grady-White's longstanding practice of building

sales through offering as many as three different power drive options—stern drive, outboard and traditional transom or bracket—for almost every model in the line. The Euro transom was great with outboards, but did not accommodate stern drive power very well, and a bracket on such a design is superfluous. The Euro transom was another step on Grady-White's path to becoming an “outboards only” company.

In 1994, the integrated transom was introduced on a highly successful update of



Grady-White introduced the 263 Chase in 1994, and for the first time included an enclosed head area within the console. Now fishing and family comfort had come to the center console, once considered a macho, hard core fishing design.

Grady-White's dual console 19-footer, the boat design that had spearheaded the company's move to a coastal fishing boat emphasis in the early 1980s. The new *192 Tournament* was marketed as a family fishing boat, great for coastal use and casual fishing, and it stayed in the line for nine years before being replaced by the *185 Tournament* and *205 Tournament* dual consoles in model year 2003.

1994 was remarkable for Grady-White in yet one more very important way. At the Harkers Island photo shoot that year, the factory sales staff was introduced to the *263 Chase*, a breakthrough new center console replete with integrated transom and, most remarkable of all, a standard head area inside of the roomy console. The transition of the macho, hardcore, Spartan center console to a family-friendly yet very, very capable and comfortable multi-use sportfishing platform continued to evolve. The *Chase* 27-foot center console, renamed the *273 Chase* after a redesign in 2001, remains very popular among Grady customers. It remains in the lineup 14 years after its introduction. And today, a head area is a standard feature in almost every Grady-White 22 feet or longer, including center consoles.

Fact is, the rules had completely changed from the 1980s annual Harkers Island photo

shoot fishing trips. By 1994, Grady-White really had to make room for family shots with the introduction of the *26 Islander* that year.

This 26-foot walkaround squarely targeted the family-and-fishing boat buyer. The cabin not only offered a head, but also a refrigerator and a small but well-appointed galley plus roomy and comfortable areas for sleeping. The *Islander* also introduced some truly innovative seating features, including a port bench seat in the companion area and a molded-in cushioned bench seat forward of the new integrated transom. And with its relatively narrow 8'6" beam, it was trailerable. In fact, one Grady-White couple, Bill and Nancy Shaddix, trailered an *Islander* from Florida across the Rockies and went up the Inside Passage to Alaska. No doubt, Grady-White owners were not only



In 1993, the 192 Tournament dual console incorporated the SeaV² hull in Grady-White's saltwater oriented 19-footers.



The 24-foot Voyager, introduced in 1995, was well targeted at families with a coastal lifestyle.

family folks, but quite adventurous. In one form or another, the *Islander* lasted in the line until the 2005 model year. With an integrated transom, the *Islander* was offered as outboard only, of course.

By 1994 and 1995, Grady-White was offering stern drive power only in the 22 *Seafarer* and 24 *Explorer* models. All the rest were outboard only. In 1996, the *Explorer* was replaced by a model offering an improved helm area and a more comfortable cabin and seating—the integrated outboard bracket walkaround 248 *Voyager*. Now known as the 258 *Journey*, the same basic design remains in the line today. That left only the 22 *Seafarer* as a stern drive offering from Grady-White for 1996. The decision had already been

made that for Grady-White, the boats would be offered with factory-installed Yamaha outboards only.

Well, almost.

Grady-White just had to try a stern drive one more time. The company became enamored of the Volvo diesel stern drive and in the 1999 model year offered the 274 *Sailfish*. Despite all the clamoring for this diesel stern drive from factory representatives and some dealers, the 274 *Sailfish* was no groundswell and it was gone from the line by the 2001 model year, supplanted by the 282 *Sailfish*, a marvelous re-creation of the original Grady-White big-boat outboard.



One of Grady-White's most popular models, the 282 Sailfish was handsome, comfortable and well designed for coastal use. And, by the late 1980s, thanks largely to Eddie's leadership, Grady-White was a world leader in fisheries conservation and catch and release programs.

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE: THE CATAMARANS

In August 1996 for model year 1997, Grady-White introduced the *F-26 Tigercat* walkaround catamaran to great fanfare at the dealer meeting in Norfolk, VA. Two years later, in August 1998, the *X-26 Tigercat* center console was revealed to dealers. With that, the Grady-White lineup included two power catamarans, boats that in the scheme of things you could hardly call disastrous. The customers who bought the *Tigercat* models absolutely loved them, and by all accounts they still do. The boats offered great performance, they were rough water boats and great fishing boats, and were roomy and comfortable, if not particularly handsome to a traditional eye. But in the end, for Grady-White, they were boats that did not fit the product lineup.

Catamarans, or the concept of multiple hulls, had been around for a long time—probably



Grady introduced the F-26 catamaran in 1996. Purchasers loved it, and it was a great fishing boat. But in the end, the design was not a great fit for Grady-White.

because they do their job so well. In the late 1980s, Americans got a fresh look at them during the America's Cup races off Western Australia. Chris Smith, Eddie and Jo's son, was by then a strapping young man. He signed on as crew for a 12-meter yacht during the trials, and his parents dutifully went to Freemantle to witness their son's efforts.

In service as crew boats, press boats and some spectator craft were a number of large, motor-powered catamarans. Everybody was impressed with their rough water capabilities. When the "Freemantle Doctor," the notorious on-shore winds, piped up in the afternoons, the seas off Freo churned into a maelstrom. It made for great sailing. It also made for stomachs that churned as well. Unless you were on one of the big cats.

Kris Carroll weighs in on the subject. "A number of dealers were practically demanding a catamaran. And we listen carefully to our dealers and their customers, and that's how we initially got involved in the project. Eddie went to the America's Cup and was very impressed with his catamaran experience. Soon after that, Frank Longino made a special trip to Australia to analyze the catamaran market. We put a lot of thought



The X-26 Tigercat debuted in 1998 and was a great performer, if a little unconventional looking to many traditional Grady-White customers.

into it. There was a lot of talk in the industry, a lot of push for those boats. As it turned out, we were the leading edge of new technology to make the product popular as a great sportfishing boat. And with our well-known brand, we brought real credibility to the catamaran niche. We are really proud of those we built.

“But as we developed our catamarans, we found out there are pros and cons to everything. First, we found out that catamarans were not a big enough niche for us. What’s more the product turned out to be confusing for our dealers because it focused attention away from our other boats. And manufacturing the boat turned out to be expensive, so the retail cost of each boat was somewhat higher than in a traditional type boat of similar length. Also, due to the sponsons, you don’t have a traditional look or a traditional cabin and lots of our customers and dealers are pretty

traditional. The customer experience was very positive; the customers who bought our Grady-White catamarans just loved them and continue to love them. But, in the end they weren’t right for our company.”

The catamarans were both discontinued by Grady-White in 2000.

It wasn’t the first experiment by the company, nor will it likely be the last although corporate wisdom has grown exponentially. “We’ll try things again, but our big concern today is to give our customers exactly what they want,” says Kris. Grady-White took much away from the catamaran experience. The company learned what a depth of experience it has. The company learned things to do and things not to do. And the company learned that to succeed as a team it should not be afraid to keep pushing, to find the next plateau.



For years, during Grady-White dealer meetings, dealers gathered at Eddie Smith's home off the Pamlico River in Bath, NC, to enjoy camaraderie, learn from each other, and conduct in-water boat tests.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR: AWARD WINNING DEALERS

Eddie Smith instinctively knew, almost from the first day he hit the road to introduce himself to dealers, that his company might someday grow to have a world-class manufacturing facility and be as capable as anyone in the world at building boats efficiently, but that without a superior distribution organization to meet customer needs, all the skills and tools at accounting, managing and manufacturing counted for very little. The retail dealer is where the rubber meets the road, not only for sales volume but also for creating relationships with customers who are ready and willing to pay for high quality products. The dealer has a one-to-one relationship with the customer, and as the 1980s turned into the 1990s and year followed year, the key to attaining the next level for Grady was to make that dealer/customer relationship thrive. Although they are independent businesses, dealers were and are the face of Grady-White in the customers' eyes.

So, as Wiley Corbett stepped in to lead the company in 1987, he and Eddie assigned Doug Gomes the task of grooming the dealers in improving every aspect of dealing with both the

company and with customers. Shelley Tubaugh came in under Doug in that same year and soon was specifically charged with improving dealer relations with an eye toward long term methods of improving the customer/dealer relationship. Over the next few years, the allocation system came in and as sales were purposely limited, Doug and Shelley worked hard to keep dealers happy with the system that Grady-White created. As Kris Carroll stepped into the presidency in 1993, she began to explore the meaning of the brand as well as develop the



As vice president of sales, Doug Gomes was assigned the task of measuring and improving dealer and customer satisfaction. Doug, working with Shelley Tubaugh and others, helped conceive Grady-White's prestigious Admiral's Circle dealer award.

specific vision for Grady-White which turned out to be: “Together, delivering the ultimate boating experience.” Along with that vision, Kris developed the missions that the company must strive toward to achieve its goals. That included continuing to develop the industry’s best distribution channels.

But how?

One of the things that Kris and her managers came to understand more than ever during the mid-1990s was that measurement of everything was key. “You can’t manage what you can’t measure,” and Grady-White had learned that the value of measuring did not apply just to yards of fiberglass roving, kitting supplies, stainless screw counts, bow rails, cushions and thru-hull fittings. Success wasn’t just dollars coming in and units going out the door. Measurements could be applied to satisfaction through surveys for new boat buyers and other customers. And if you can measure satisfaction and you can measure unit volume and sales dollars, you then have a significant way to truly measure and compare dealer performance as well as create incentives for improved performance among dealers that help achieve the company’s sales and goals. Further, it made sense to consult the highest achieving dealers in getting input and developing

new products and services. After all, they are closest to the customer. In 1997, this was the seed of the idea that created the Grady-White Admiral’s Circle and Grady-White Service Excellence awards. These two awards were first given to dealers at the 1998 model year dealer meeting, and the enthusiastic dealer network warmly received them. They continue to be a coveted mark of honor among all Grady-White dealers, and now are important to customers in their buying decisions.

The Admiral’s Circle and Service Excellence concepts complemented Sales Achievement awards and superseded many of the other dealer awards that had been given over the years that were based only on sales dollars.

This combination of dealer awards allowed Grady-White to identify and provide incentives to dealers based on goals, projections and actual numbers (dollars or units or some combination) each year, plus reported customer satisfaction. The standards are set high; nevertheless, many dealers achieve Admiral’s Club and or Service Excellence or a combination thereof each year. All of the awards are important and they help provide incentive for establishing satisfaction drivers such as Grady-White Owners’ Clubs. In short, the dealer awards are win, win, win.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE: MOST COMPLETE LINE OF CENTER CONSOLES

As a result of the growing effort at collaboration with its boat owners, Grady-White continued to create very successful products in the late 1990s. In 1998 the company replaced the *175 Spirit* with a great new SeaV² 18-foot center console—the *180 Sportsman*. The *180* had a big-boat look and feel at the console and helm, and lots of thoughtful details including a cell phone holder. Other center consoles were added to the fleet: the *222 Fisherman* in 1999, with its aft-cockpit fold down bulkhead and insulated storage in the bow; and also that year, the brawny and very comfortable *306 Bimini*, with a standard head area and stand-up headroom inside the console plus excellent storage inside and out. The *Bimini* console interior effectively created cabin boat comfort in a center console hull, and was a breakthrough design. With its 10'7" beam, it was an immediate hit with the serious offshore crowd. In its maiden run off the Florida Keys, the *Bimini* smoked the local fleet on the run back from Alligator Reef.

These models complemented the longstanding 20-foot center console first introduced as the *204 Fisherman* (now known as

the *209 Escape*), in addition to the 24-foot *247 Strike* (which became the *257 Advance* in mid-2002) and 1994's *263 Chase* (now known as the *273*). By mid-1998, Grady-White was offering the widest range of center consoles in the industry by far. And with Grady-White's introduction of the remarkable 33-foot *336 Canyon* center console in 2007, as the company's 50th year approached, the company best known for its legendary walkaround cabin and, more recently, express cabin models, more than held its own with a great lineup of outstanding center console models.



By 1998, Grady-White offered center consoles in seven sizes from 18-30 feet. Many offer customers a enclosed head area. Pictured here is the *247 Advance*.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX: THE MILLENNIUM

The turn of the new century brought about continued evolution in boat models, features, styling and engineering. The new century also quickly saw an increasing recognition of what Grady-White and its leaders, especially Eddie Smith, had been doing for many years in terms of customer intimacy, building business, and fisheries conservation activity. Eddie Smith's leadership, long admired throughout the boating industry, had initially been recognized on a larger playing field when, in 1998, Ernst and Young named him Carolina's Entrepreneur of the Year, but as the new century dawned, the recognition grew in national and international scale.

The most well-known accolade for the Grady-White company is a long, uninterrupted series of J.D. Power and Associates award rankings, including "Highest in Customer Satisfaction with Coastal Fishing Boats (17-30 feet) Seven Times in a Row" in early 2008. In fact, Grady-White has received the highest ranking in its category in J.D. Power studies from the first time these were conducted in the marine industry in 2001. As of the 2009 model year, no one else in the coastal boat category had been ranked highest even

once. Furthermore, since 2002 Grady-White has received highest ranking for excellence in customer satisfaction in its category every single time in the National Marine Manufacturers Association (NMMA) Customer Satisfaction Index (CSI).

At the turn of the century, the awards just kept on coming for Grady-White and for Eddie Smith. The Development Commission in Grady-White's home base of Pitt County, North Carolina, named the company "Industry of the Year" in 2001, an important community recognition that was great for employee and associate morale. Also in 2001, in a ceremony in Washington, DC, Eddie was recognized on a national level when the American Sportfishing Association named him its first Lifetime Achievement recipient, citing outstanding long-term service to conservation and the fishing and boating industries.

These recognitions and others were testimonials to a company and business that began from Day One with Grady and White's dedication to strong, quality-built boats, enormously furthered and imbued by the



Eddie and Kris receiving Grady-White's first J.D. Power and Associates award in 2001. Grady has since received highest ranking in its category in every third-party customer satisfaction study ever done in the marine industry.



Grady-White received Boating Magazine's 2001 Boat of the Year award in recognition of the breakthrough 330 Express.

Smith family's added value and principle of ensuring complete customer satisfaction. Those core values—strength, quality and a dedication to customers—had come together at Grady-White and were honed by a set of long-term associates and managers over 50 years of hard work, dedication, effort, trial and error, and in some cases sheer luck. In the new century, top managers at Grady-White are quick to give much of the credit to dealerships, associates and vendor partners as well. But the bottom line is that through the knowledge of, and consistent dedication to, strongly built quality, and Eddie's and his father's values and principles, plus a close association with company associates, the awards came as no real surprise.

Grady also started out the new millennium's first model year with the introduction of the *265 Express*, a new style boat for Grady-White complete with a center helm and seating around the helmsman. Over the next six years, the express style boats added models to the Grady-White lineup and enhanced sales—without making the walkarounds obsolete. The *265 Express* spawned a great new lineup at the company over the next few years including the 2001 *330 Express*, Boating Magazine's "Boat of the Year." The *265* was a 26-footer hailed as a serious offshore sportfisher, a very nice boat with a dedicated following, but in this model Grady did not use the Euro transom, opting instead for a clever folding aft motor well bulkhead, sacrificing the aft seating, transom doors and insulated storage that the integrated bracket transom offered and that Grady customers found so attractive. Likewise, the relatively small cabin and resulting big cockpit proved popular with hardcore fishermen, but not so much with other buyers. Nevertheless the *Express 265* had a good run and lasted six years in the lineup.

The accolades continued. Eddie Smith was inducted into the National Marine Manufacturers Association (NMMA) Hall of Fame in a ceremony at the Miami International Boat Show on February 12, 2003. The NMMA Hall of Fame recognizes and honors industry leaders for their pursuit of quality,

innovation and perfection within the marine industry, and distinguishes those who continue to make substantial and lasting contributions toward the advancement of the recreational boating industry in product development, competitive activities, environmental protection, and legislative support. Needless to say, Eddie did not take a lot of personal credit for the honor. He credited hard work, good fortune, a supportive family, outstanding co-workers and especially his father, Edward C. Smith, Sr., “George,” for the honor. Happily, George was there at the induction ceremony honoring his son.

As if adding an exclamation point, recognizing the many great relationships that the company had built with its dealers, the Marine Retailer Association of America (MRAA) named Grady-White Boats as the 2006 Manufacturer of the Year for “enriching the goals of MRAA and for continued support of the marine industry and MRAA.”

Eddie’s plaudits continued as well. In 2008, the North Carolina Citizens for Business and Industry named Eddie Smith to the North Carolina Business Hall of Fame, both for his continuing success and for his longstanding support for that organization.



Eddie Smith was named to the NMMA's Hall of Fame at the Miami Boat Show in 2003. Here after the ceremony are (l-r): Eddie Smith, Jo Smith, Eddie Smith, Sr. (George) and Chris Smith.



Grady-White began the company's unique Owners' Forums in 1998, traveling to destinations all over the country to listen to dealers and their customers and gain input on every facet of boat usage and preferences.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN: OWNERS FEEDBACK

At the first decade of the Twenty-First Century, Grady-White bills itself at “The Ultimate in Customer Satisfaction,” and every product detail is shaped by customer influence.

Grady-White has maintained and valued a direct conduit to customers almost from the day the Smith era began, and not just at dealership visits, boat shows, customer plant visits and at dealer events. One of the earliest outreach efforts—the Grady-White *Anchorline*, born in 1981—may well be oldest continuously-published customer newsletter in the marine industry. It was an immediate hit with customers and invited feedback from the very first issue. (At the time, Eddie wondered why he had not been doing a newsletter for years.) The *Anchorline* is now in its 28th year, and has remained a strong facet of Grady-White’s marketing effort and is just one of the important elements in propelling Grady-White’s powerful and important relationship with its customers.

In late 1998, Grady-White began something that remains unprecedented in the industry. In order to take the concept of customer feedback to a new level, Grady-White began a system of

regular, significant customer feedback with the establishment of the company’s Owners’ Forums.

Kris Carroll explains, “Several times each year, our executives travel to our Owners’ Forums, which we have held in many places around the country. Our main agenda is simply to listen to our customers. We invite input. We ask these customers to tell us how they are *really* using their boats, and we ask how we should evolve our boats to meet their future needs. We look to them to tell us what they want in a Grady-White. We don’t know what they’re going to say, these 35 or 40 people per meeting, but the exercise always energizes us and increases our resolve to do great things for our customers. We are never afraid of criticism, and sometimes we hear strong words, but we listen and we are confident in our product, and believe that feedback is necessary whether it’s positive or negative. I believe that the initiation of these Owners’ Forums have been one of the best things that we have done in the 2000s.”

Owner input at Grady-White doesn’t begin and end with informal meetings at boat shows or at dealer events, or even with the unique Owners’ Forums, either. Grady-White invites customer

visits to the factory in Greenville to see how their boats are built. Since 2000, when the number of visitors began to be carefully tracked, Grady-White has averaged over 245 visits each year, meaning that on any given business day several visits are conducted. Almost every Grady-White manager, supervisor, and top executive conducts visits during the year. “We never fail to learn something, every time!” says Joey Weller. Today, visitors are “Grady Guests” and photos of their visits are uploaded to a special area of the Grady-White website.

Actually, customer plant visits go back quite a way. Here’s what Eddie Smith had to say in 1978 as he began to formally invite customers to visit and watch their boats being made. “You are invited to visit our new, modern, air conditioned, dust-free plant here in Greenville. We can show you how a Grady-White is made from stem to stern. Then you can fully understand why a Grady-White is the choice of knowledgeable boaters. Sooner or later as a serious boater, I’ll bet you’ll own a Grady-White.” Eddie’s invitation stands today—every word as written. Grady-White gets to know the visiting customers, all the while gaining input and insight about their boating wants and needs. Then as now, Grady-White managers agreed, the visits are just good business.

As important as the *Anchorline*, Owners’ Forums and the Grady Guests programs, is Grady-White’s system of ongoing customer surveys and customer communication through the consumer website at custserv@gradywhite.com and over the telephone with the customer relations department. The company takes much pride that the representatives “will bend over backwards to help ensure satisfaction” and that the ratio of representatives to customer is the highest in the industry.

Grady-White conducts regular surveys of satisfaction on every new boat purchase. The first one takes place 30 days after the purchase, and a follow-through survey is initiated one year after the purchase. Grady-White also conducts lifecycle surveys to understand more fully the complete company-customer relationship. What’s remarkable about the new boat survey is not just that they are conducted, but that each one is read by Kris Carroll and the management team and when a customer is not completely satisfied Grady-White aims to find out why.

The Grady Care aspect of owner satisfaction and feedback doesn’t end at the plant. Back in the late 1970s, Eddie Smith attended an owners’ fishing tournament in Texas and almost immediately after he returned, Grady-White began to help dealers organize a system of

Grady-White family-type owners' fishing tournaments. Today, some of those owners' tournaments have been held annually for almost 30 years, and the variety is amazing, with kids' awards, cookouts, lobster boils, clambakes, Mardi Gras-style "King of the Dock" celebrations, and much more. Obviously, since those early owners' tournament days the scope of owners' get-togethers has grown and expanded but the objective has always been about camaraderie, fun and fellowship, not cash prizes. By 2009, many Grady-White dealers have sponsored and/or helped and organize Grady-White Owners' Clubs as well as an incredible variety of nearly 100 other events across the country.

There are currently more than 20 Grady-White Clubs from Seattle to the Keys, and the number is rapidly growing. All events are publicized through the Grady-White website and receive tremendous support through dealer efforts. The events are fun! River cruises, resort visits, fishing seminars, tournaments, conservation outings, open houses, raft-ups, picnics, sand bar parties...there is always something going on with a Grady-White Club or dealer event. Factory representatives attend many of these events; in any case, at every gathering they solicit feedback on making the Grady experience even better.



A growing number of Grady-White Owner's Clubs conduct all kinds of events around the county from simple raft-ups and cook-outs to multi-day trips. It's all a part of "The Grady Life."

CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT: EXPRESS YOURSELF

Engine power options among outboards had improved by 2001, and Yamaha had introduced the Saltwater Series II, with increased performance with higher horsepower engine offerings. This created opportunities for Grady-White's design and management team, and after consultation with many dealers, customers and associates who had expressed great interest in a larger Grady-White, the company introduced a true breakthrough model in 2001, the 33-foot *330 Express*, the overall largest outboard boat ever introduced by any production builder to date. Stylistically, the *330 Express* seized on the concept that had begun in 1999 with the *265 Express*, but the *330* was very different from that and from anything else on the market. And customers loved it.

Grady-White sold every *330 Express* it could make for seven years running. The boat was a superb sportfishing platform, yet Grady-White had made it so much more. The fact is, outboards don't take up room inside the boat, so Grady-White took full advantage by creating a cabin, galley, sleeping quarters and living area that was comparable to inboard-powered boats 10 or 15 feet longer, and

with all the amenities including diesel generator, air conditioning, even an entertainment center with stereo, TV and VCR (in later model years, flatscreen TV, DVD and satellite radio). Not only that, but the center helm created a nice "social area" (Grady coined the phrase "surround seating") on the boat for the helmsman and friends to enjoy the view, conversation—or watching gamefish baits. As if all that weren't enough, Grady-White designed and introduced a fold-away aft cockpit bench seat with nice cushioning, and took advantage of bolstering on the aft cockpit coaming as a seat back, to make what many call the "nicest seat in the house" for the trip home. The real beauty was that this aft seat folded out of the way to create an even bigger cockpit for the fisherman. Grady applied for the patent for this aft seat design in 2001.

Here was a boat that was as comfortable as, and performed as well if not better than, boats costing many thousands more. No wonder Boating Magazine named Grady-White's *330 Express* "Boat of the Year." The boating public agreed wholeheartedly. The *330* was a smash hit. And it all came about through



The 33-foot 330 Express (pictured) was just the beginning. In 2005, Grady White introduced the 36-foot 360 Express to great acclaim and in 2006, the 30-foot 305 Express. The express models proved to be both superb fishing boats and great family boats that appealed to a generation of Grady-White owners now having older kids—and grandkids.



The 225 Tournament was another breakthrough. With open styling, yet an enclosed head area, it made all-day outings on big water comfortable for the whole family.

collaboration and teamwork—through the customer input process and the management team’s close relationship with Yamaha outboards. The advancement in outboard power had created real opportunities.

In the 2002 model year, Grady geared up for the burgeoning demand for the new 330, and soon began inviting input from customers in planning an even bigger express model. The company integrated its aft bench seats into more models, and introduced lockable horizontal rod storage on the 273 *Chase*, plus room for a head in the redesigned 22-foot center console 222 *Fisherman*.

In the 2003 model year, Grady-White came with a new center console to bridge the gap between the 273 *Chase* and the big 306 *Bimini*. The 28-foot 283 *Release* featured a deluxe lean bar with a 45-gallon livewell, tackle storage and a freshwater sink, and of course a nice-

sized lockable head. The *Release* also featured enormous insulated storage boxes and the fold away aft bench seat. The boat makes a superb center console fish-and-family boat.

2003 also witnessed the introduction of another center console that became popular with many customers because of its versatility for family fishing—the new 22-foot dual console 225 *Tournament*. This was the first dual-console style boat anywhere that came complete with a roomy enclosed head area. Add in the fold away aft bench seat, and huge storage areas for all kinds of water toys, and now daylong outings on open water or longer inshore excursions were a very enjoyable family affair. The 225 was comfortable doing just about any activity you can imagine on big water, like the Puget Sound, Chesapeake Bay, Long Island Sound or Nantucket Sound. The boat powered well with a number of single engine options, and was a

good value. Thus, the *225 Tournament* became very popular with dealers.

As the year progressed, Grady was eager to follow up on the popularity of the *225 Tournament* dual-console and wanted not to be just a “big boat” builder. The success of the *225* had shown a lot of promise for smaller Grady-Whites. Grady was also interested in maintaining market share among smaller boat buyers, the thinking being that smaller-boat Grady buyers eventually become bigger-boat Grady buyers. Therefore, in the 2004 model year Grady-White was “Introducing a Whole New Generation,” as the ads went, targeting and enticing younger buyers of smaller dual consoles with the 18-foot *185 Tournament* and the 20-foot *205 Tournament*.

(The *205* features a small enclosed head area similar to the *225 Tournament*.) Both models have traditional outboard transoms, ample storage, as well as comfortable seating; the *205* even offered an optional sleeper seat, now standard.

In 2005, inspired in part by more powerful and efficient premium outboard engines and, to a greater extent, by customers’ requests for an even bigger boat, Grady-White culminated a two-year design project with the introduction of, by far, the largest Grady-White in the company’s history—the 36-foot *360 Express*.

Engineering’s David Neese says, “Considering length, width and volume, the *360 Express* was, and remains four years later, the biggest outboard-powered boat available anywhere. With the speed,



Based on the success of the *225 Tournament*, Grady-White introduced “A Whole New Generation” of dual consoles, including the 18-foot *185 Tournament* and the 20-foot *205 Tournament*. These boats were smaller and directed at younger buyers.



The 2005 360 Express was truly a breakthrough, offering the size and ride to go anywhere, plus, thanks to the additional room that results from outboard power, the amenities below decks are comparable to inboard boats costing hundreds of thousands of dollars more.

range and efficiency of today's outboards, and thanks to our design team, this express cabin boat created a whole new category.

"Our painstaking development process with the *360* involved countless interviews with Grady-White owners, dealers and associates, and culminated in a wish list of features that had simply had never been put together in a production boat before, much less in an outboard model." Grady-White did something else that turned out to be very smart: the company made the wish list substantially all standard. After all, the sales force reasoned, customers who were in a position to buy such boats were likely to get all the goodies. Why "tease" them with add-ons they'll probably get anyway? Name the bottom line, and if it's fair, they will buy it, Grady-White reasoned. And buy it they did. Grady-White has sold every *360 Express* built.

The success of the *360* was not just because of size, power, a terrific list of amenities and a great development process. The cabin was magnificent. The interior was at an entirely new level for any outboard boat. The space that resulted from not utilizing an inboard engine room allowed a cabin size that compared to the interior of a much larger sportfishing yacht. The *360* cabin offered every amenity

to make the family comfortable, and the entire boat certainly entertained guests graciously in a handsome setting.

There never before has been a helm area on an outboard powered boat that is so comfortable and easy to use. The deluxe captain's chair adjusts vertically and horizontally. The helm itself features a big stainless wheel with power-assisted tilt steering, and operation is programmable and electronically controlled with engine synch mode, making triple engines as easy to run as a twin engines. The boat today is available with either twin or triple engines. And, the "surround seating" creates a very comfortable and very social area around the helm.

Like every Grady-White, the *360 Express* is superior beyond its size range for big water boating and is a fishing boat with capability and detail over and above any outboard. In fact, its primary competition from a capability standpoint is inboard powered and significantly bigger and far more expensive. This boat's big SeaV² hull takes customers anywhere the fish are biting and back again in safety, comfort and faster than even much larger diesel inboard boats. Here is a shining example of Grady-White's belief in the power of collaborative creation.

Grady White was making quite a name for itself in the early 2000s with the highly successful

330 and 360 express models. By 2006 and 2007, almost every significant competitor had their own version on the way. The fact remains, however, that Grady-White was well ahead of the game with these breakthrough outboard boats, and with Grady-White's constant tweaking, these home-run designs were just getting better and better in customers' eyes every model year. Yamaha checkmated all the outboard engine competition in 2006 with the introduction of the four-stroke eight-cylinder F350, and that engine was developed with Grady-White *Express* models in mind. And another real triumph of the express design for Grady-White was that introduction of these models did not seem to adversely affect walkaround cabin sales significantly. So it wasn't long before the company extended the Grady-White express models line to a 30-footer to complement the others: the 305 *Express*.



The 305 Express brought Grady's express styling, a large cabin and well-designed amenities to the 30-foot market. The boat captured a new market and did not compete significantly with the 30-foot walkaround 300 Marlin.

Almost from the time the 330 and 360 came out, Grady-White customers and associates in large numbers had suggested that the company incorporate the "social comforts" of the helm and cabin areas, as well as the offshore fishing functionality of their cockpits, in a more compact 30-foot express hull. "This was quite a challenge," says David Neese. "Incorporating big boat features in a smaller hull is always tempting but very hard to do well. You can't just 'shrink things.' We knew we would have to be very innovative. But by doing what we do best—asking our boat owners a lot of questions and listening to them and dealers, plus 'sweating the details,' we created an exciting new boat offering an enormous number of new features and benefits of her own." The 305 *Express* features a compact but very nice cabin with a very serviceable galley, an entertainment center, a handsome teak and holly sole plus a well-designed teak oval-shaped dinette with seating for four. The helm area was roomy and sociable, and the cockpit area was incomparable for a fish boat in the 30-foot size range.

Even with all the success of the express models, Grady-White was not about to ignore or abandon the other designs in the fleet—the dual consoles, the center consoles and of course the walkaround cabins. At the New York Boat Show in late December 2006 and early January 2007,

Grady-White introduced what the company in its advertising called “The Ultimate Coastal Family Boat,” the 275 *Tournament* dual-console, upping the ante in that category.

Joey Weller explains, “More and more people have moved to the coast and many have purchased second homes and are enjoying all kinds of recreational opportunities on big water—not just fishing. We believed that this created a substantial niche for the 275 *Tournament*. The quality, reliability, safety and saltwater-tough performance define the 275 as a true Grady-White—the level of amenities you’d expect to find in a top-of-the-line open inland family boat, plus saltwater, coastal weather capability.” The boat was an instant best seller, with amenities including really comfortable helm and companion seating, a very roomy head, plenty of storage, and optional luxuries like an electronically controlled extendable full size lounge seat.

For the 2008 model year, Grady-White aimed to energize its predominance among center console builders with the introduction of the company’s biggest center console to date, the 33-foot 336 *Canyon*. The boat did in fact invigorate the center console market for Grady-White. It was a hit with customers, great looking and a very impressive performer. The boating press raved. With the size of the “cabin” inside the console



The 275 Tournament was introduced as the “ultimate coastal family boat” and was designed with amenities of a premium inland cruiser and Grady-White’s inherent saltwater capability. Targeted at the coastal lifestyle, it was an instant hit.

(complete with head, freshwater sink and shower, bulk storage plus a sizeable berth), Grady had achieved in creating much of the creature comfort of a cabin model in a center console.

David Neese said at the time the 336 was introduced, “The 336 *Canyon* brings together what customers and dealers have asked for in a big, powerful center console that blends comfort and convenience with first-class fishing features to ensure success on those long offshore trips. This boat is a standout, with an innovative helm and seating, super cockpit arrangement, and a lockable console interior filled with great features including a berth. It’s the many small details that make the 336 a big, beautiful picture. And what performance! While the 336 is available with twin Yamaha F250 four stroke engines, with the newly available F350 four stroke Yamahas she just hums along and cruises efficiently at over 30 mph with a top speed over 50 mph.”

CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE: ON INTO THE FUTURE...

For the 50th anniversary model year, in July 2008 Grady-White introduced a name and design familiar to those knowledgeable about Grady-White's long history: the 2009 *290 Chesapeake*. The *290 Chesapeake* stands for many of the things that has made Grady-White a company with a storied past and a very bright future.

"What sets the *290* apart from other coastal boats in this size range is just how enjoyable and easy it is to operate," says Joey Weller. "The spacious cockpit, cabin and helm areas, the very comfortable deluxe helm seating and optional 'wraparound-style' companion seating, plus great visibility afforded by the large, well-ventilated protective windshield, make this a great investment for families who enjoy spending time together outdoors on the water. The *Chesapeake* is classic Grady-White through and through."

Also for the 50th Anniversary model year, in August 2008 Grady-White introduced yet another "ultimate coastal family boat"—the 30-foot *307 Tournament* dual-console. David Neese says, "We believed, based on customer input and demographic trends, that there was room for a larger boat designed for those who live or have second homes at the coast. These customers

were telling us they wanted a really comfortable all purpose cruiser that was super functional for virtually any coastal activity you can name—outing, diving, skiing, day trips and exploring, picnicking, as well as fishing." In response to those requests, Grady-White created the *307* using a proven ocean-going Grady-White and Hunt-designed 10'7" beam, 30-foot LOA SeaV² hull, along with a customer wish list of features and options designed to assure a great day on the water for the whole family. A transom door and sturdy swim ladder allow easy access to the water. Both the helm and companion seats are big enough for two people and are available with electronic movement controls, as is the portside lounge seat. Like its Grady-White siblings, the *205*, *225* and *275 Tournament*, the 2009 Grady-White *307* offers an enclosed head area. Plus, in the *307*, there is a five-foot berth just perfect for a worn-out four- or five-year old. The berth area and head enclosure even have optional air conditioning. The *307 Tournament* has a wet bar as well as an optional built-in electric outdoor grill. In short, the boat offers seating and comforts of an inland cruiser in a big boat hull with proven rough water, big water safety and capability.



For the 50th Anniversary 2009 model year, Grady-White introduced the 290 Chesapeake, a superb 29-foot walkaround with range, capability, comfort and a name the echoes the 50-year heritage of quality that goes back to the wooden boat era.



Also for 2009, Grady-White has introduced the 30-foot 307 Tournament, built with even more exciting amenities and options and true big water capability to fit the coastal lifestyle.

CHAPTER THIRTY: A GOLDEN LEGACY

Grady-White dealers, associates and especially customers old and new can look forward to Grady-White's future with confidence.

It's a far cry, only a faint echo from the beginnings in that tumbledown, drafty and leaky old tobacco warehouse on Albemarle Avenue to the most modern and efficient boat building facility in the United States. A far cry it is indeed from the simple, tough, and handsome wooden boats of Grady and White's era to today's superbly engineered, customer-inspired, nearly indestructible, wonderful-riding and easy to maintain fiberglass hulls of the 2009 model year boats. Yet every day, spirits of the past move through the floor rooms of dealerships, materialize in company meetings and pass through the offices, halls and manufacturing lines. The spirits who oversee company, customer, dealer and associate alike are Grady-White's heritage, its legacy of

50 years. Memories remind all of the intensity of purpose, the determination, the inspiration and perspiration, the great ideas and even the sheer luck that made Grady-White what it is today. Core values drive Grady-White forward with renewed purpose.

Eddie Smith likes to say, "If you're going along the road and you see a turtle on a fence post, you can rest assured that the turtle didn't get there by himself."

No one knows better than he the essential truth of that parable. A lot of people have worked at Grady-White in these 50 years, some for twenty, thirty years or more. Some stayed, some came and went. But each and every one helped Eddie Smith and Grady-White get up on that fence post. In the end, it's all about the relationships and their legacy. That's what built this great American boat company: Grady-White Boats.

THANKS TO OUR GRADY-WHITE DEALERS AND ASSOCIATES

