

Before^M the Strike



I started building one boat each winter, and the business grew from there.

PAUL MANN A CAROLINA ORIGINAL

The definition of a consummate sportsman: If Paul Mann is not crafting a new custom boat or on the hundred-fathom curve chasing marlin and tuna, he is likely in the woods or the marsh, wing shooting ducks, geese and upland game birds.



Paul Mann worked as an apprentice for several other custom boatbuilders on the Outer Banks before designing and building his own boats. To date, Paul Mann Custom Boats has delivered 41 boats over 52 feet in length in 28 years.

As a charter captain turned boatbuilder, Paul Mann is perfectly at home in North Carolina's Outer Banks. For the past 28 years, Paul Mann Custom Boats has turned out some of the most beautiful, and most functional, sport-fishing boats on the water. No two are exactly alike. And yet they all share a common lineage, having been handcrafted with an experienced eye and purpose-built to exceed the expectations of their owners.

M *How did you transition from charter captain to boatbuilder?*

I earned my captain's license when I was 20 and started running boats immediately, first starting out of a marina in downtown Manteo. I then fished out of what later became Pirate's Cove before running trips out of the Oregon Inlet Fishing Center for 16 years. After building a 52 for myself and charter fishing, I started building one boat each winter for the other guys. So I was fishing seven days a week in the spring, summer and fall, then building



boats six days a week in the winter. I finally decided to run my boatbuilding business full time. That was 28 years ago.

M *What sets your boats apart, and which are your favorites?*

I like a sleeker, more traditional Carolina look. We've built 41 boats over 52 feet so far. Our largest was the 81-foot *Georgia Girl*, but our most popular boats are in the 60- to 65-foot range. They're big enough to travel comfortably and have terrific maneuverability. I have always felt the details of the mechanical installations, the fit and finish, and the performance of our boats set us apart.

M *Mann boats are famous for having a great ride. How did you develop the hull design?*

I started building charter boats to perform well in Oregon Inlet, one of the most treacherous inlets in the world. When you design and build a hull yourself and then spend 250 days a year fishing it, you think about the tweaks and adjustments you want to make in the next one you build. That's what gives us the edge in having a great sea boat. Another thing is

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the way the bow rides a little high. You can always push it over with tabs, but you can't raise it up.

M *You're also known for having award-winning interiors, which wasn't always the case with Carolina builders.*

It really bothered me when people used to say the Carolina guys could build a great riding boat, but you had to go to Florida for nice interiors. I decided we could build them as good or better than anyone else, and we have. The cabinetry is built into the integrity of the boat, yet the faces are removable and accessible to any mechanical systems behind them. And the fit and finish is second to none.

M *How has technology changed the way you build boats?*

We always embrace new technology and explore the latest in materials. Some of it is good, and some just isn't right for the job. The lightest boat isn't always your friend

in the ocean. We overbuild our boats: They aren't the fastest or the slowest, but you can be confident they will get you and your family home safely.

M *What keeps you up at night?*

Omie Tillet used to refer to it as the wide-awakes. I didn't understand it when I was younger until I started my own boat-building business. You constantly think about different ways to build the boats more efficiently in your mind.

M *Any other hobbies besides fishing?*

I'm a wing shooter. I don't hunt for horns or fur; I just enjoy shooting the shotgun. My ultimate goal would be to travel around the world, hunting ducks, geese and upland birds year-round.

M *What's a fun Friday night at the Mann household look like?*

Just sitting on the dock behind the house with my wife, Robin, trout fishing



Mann says he feels more comfortable working in the shop than in his office.

and watching the sun set with a nice rum drink or a glass of wine. We have a 19-foot skiff which was originally built by Warren O'Neal that we've owned since the early '90s. We have completely refurbished her and enjoy spending time on the water on the Croatan Sound. That's just about as good as it gets. — *Sam White* 🐟