

***CARTER CRAFT BOAT
COMPANY – PANAMA CITY,
FLORDIA (1950'S & 1960'S)***



(Compiled by Bruce R. Danielson – Fridley, MN)

“THE CARTER CRAFT STORY”

PREFACE

The story of “Carter Craft Boats” was assembled because of the inability to find out anything about the company and history from boating books, magazines and the Internet.

After restoring a 1957 Carter Craft, Sea Hawk, 16’ molded mahogany/plywood runabout, I wanted to find out more about the company who built it, and it’s history. In March 2008 I traveled to Panama City, Florida, and Parker, which is a small suburb of Panama City. I talked to city representatives, people who had worked at the production facilities in the late 1960’s, and visited what was left of the Carter Craft Boat Company buildings.

I collected information from my trip, from other local resources, a national 1950’s boat historian, a local book, and information from the Panama City library. I played the History Detective in assembly of the information.

I also started a “Carter Craft Boat Registry” of sorts to collect names, boats and pictures of original and restored Carter Craft boats.

It is my hope that a “Carter Craft Boat Company” web site could be developed some day to assist owners and interested people in the registry and restoration of their boats

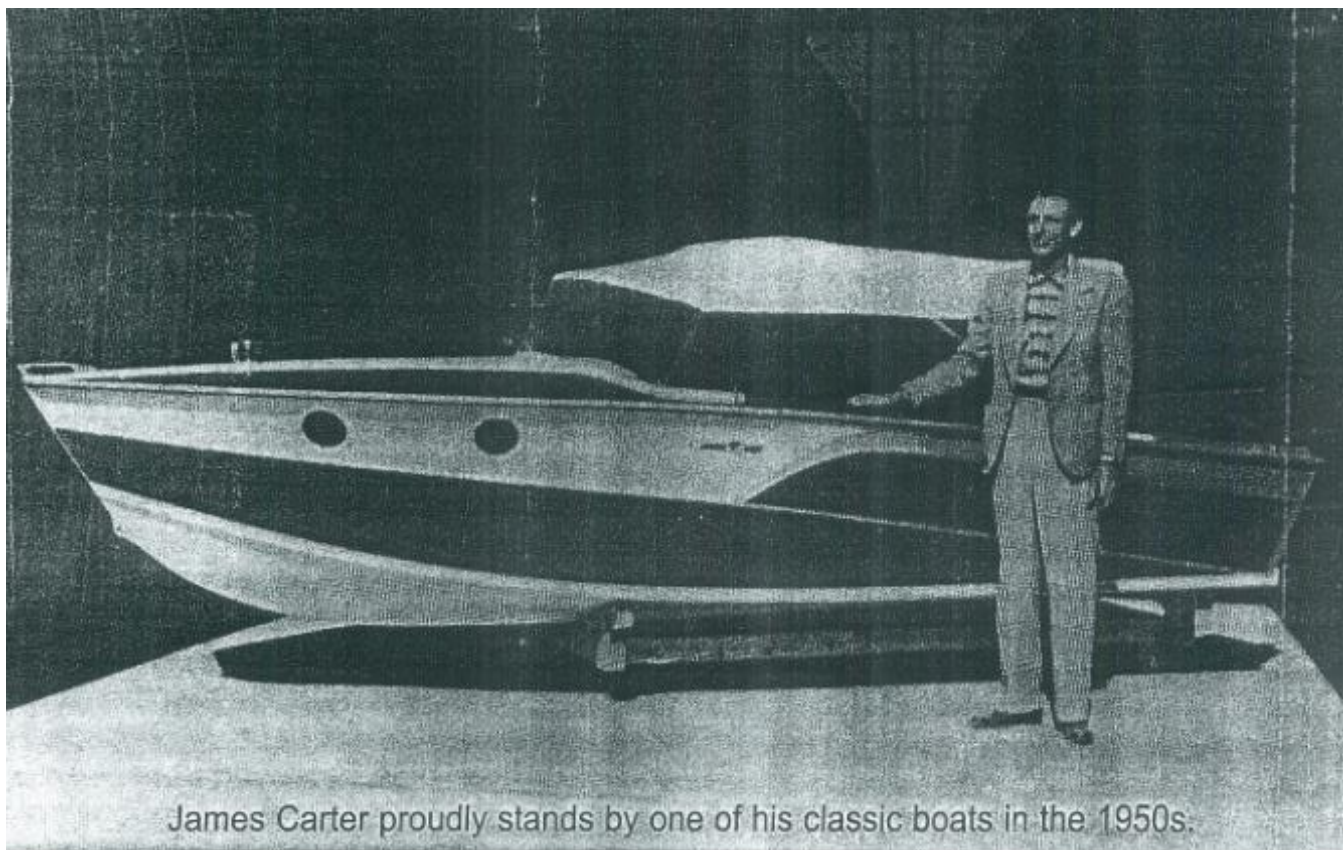
TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 1.0 Company startup, administration and operations
- 2.0 Carter Craft Facilities
- 3.0 Production information and models produced
- 4.0 Carter Craft's venture into using U.S. Rubber, Royalite, in the boat hulls
- 5.0 Advertising, Promotion and the Evinrude connection
- 6.0 Boat transportation innovations
- 7.0 Close of operations
- 8.0 What left of Carter Craft in 2008
- 9.0 Carter Craft Boat Registry
- 10.0 Information and picture credits

Updated 9/24/2010

1.0 COMPANY STARTUP, ADMINISTRATION & OPERATIONS:

- James L. Carter started building boats in 1951 in Parker, Florida. James Carter was a wood worker and cabinetmaker by trade. He started with 14' wood fishing boats and in. James built his first wood fishing boat in the late forties and named it "Phyllis Jean".
- Tom Bingham purchased the operation in 1952 and formed the Carter Craft Corporation. James Carter served as a consultant and was the inspiration for the boat designs.
- Tom Bingham was instrumental in bringing Carter Craft boats to nation wide status with featuring boats at Cypress Gardens, national boating magazines, Evinrude outboard and coke ads.
- James Carter formed a new corporation in the early 1960's called Carter Boats Inc. and continued to make boats.
- In the mid 1950's Carter Craft had issues with the City of Parker about his business. For two weeks they paid all of the employees with \$2 bills to show them what affect his business had on the local economy. Needless to say, the \$2 bills ended up all over and the issue was resolved.
- Tom Bingham purchased Carter Craft in 1952 and owned it till it closed operations in 1969. (This information provided by Sue Herring, Tom's daughter)

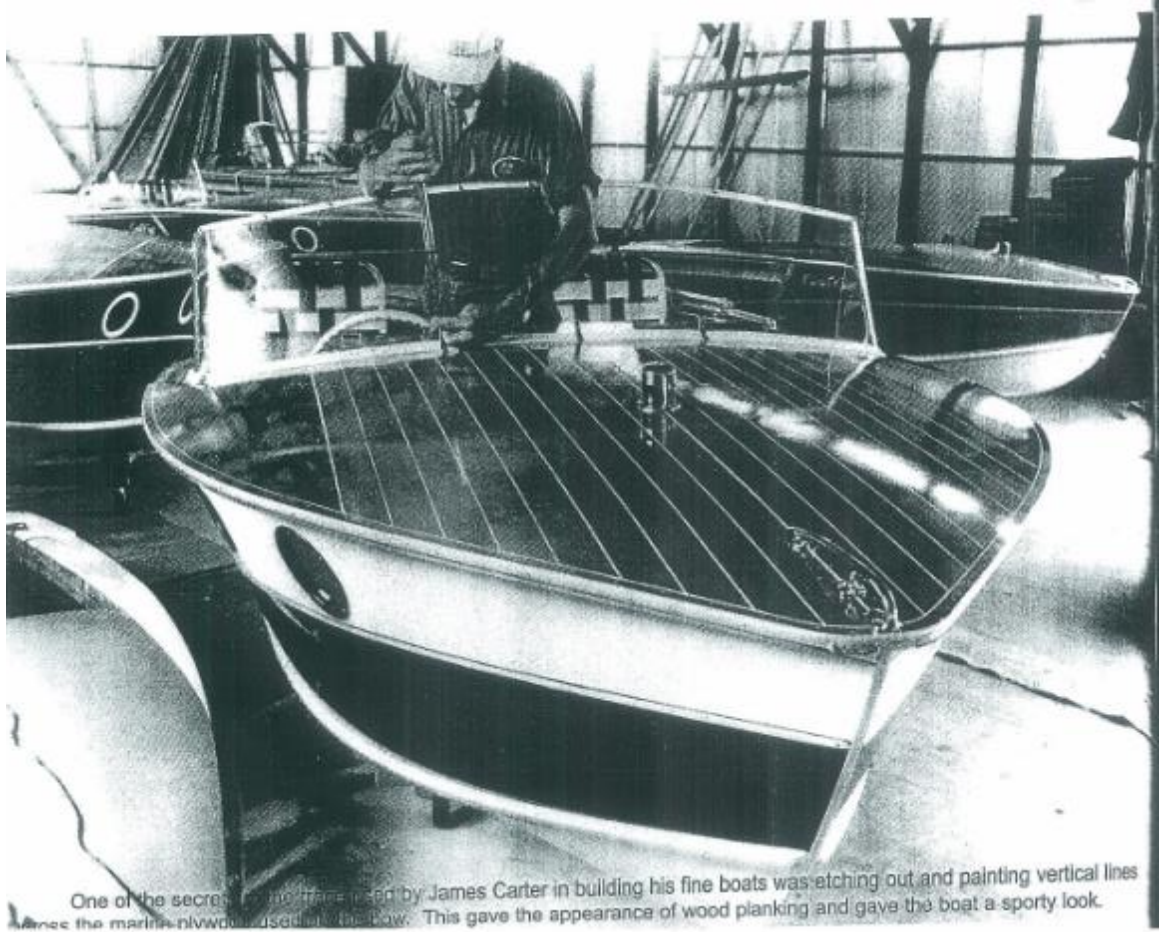


James Carter proudly stands by one of his classic boats in the 1950s.

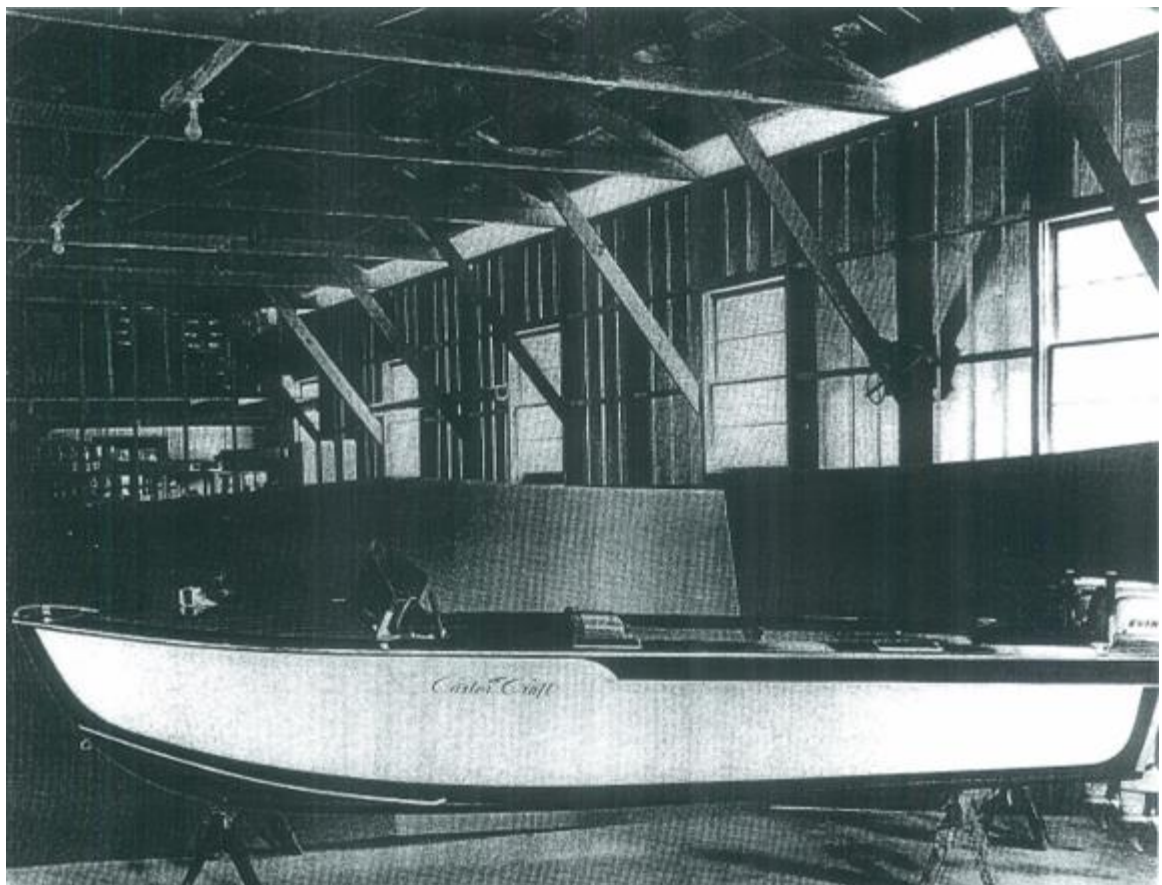
2.0 CARTER CRAFT BOAT COMPANY FACILITIES:

- James Carter purchase property behind the small Parker Baptist Church, in the late 1940's, and built his first shop for production of furniture and cabinets.
- As the business grew and the company enlarged the complex to a number of production and storage buildings. By the 1960's he had the following;
 - 16,000 sq/ft. building for the U.S. Rubber, Royalite, hull boats
 - 18,000 sq/ft building for their fiber glass boat production
 - 25,000 sq/ft building for the molded plywood boats
 - Large storage building which held boats prior to shipping

UPDATED 9/24/2010



One of the secrets of the fame used by James Carter in building his fine boats was etching out and painting vertical lines since the marine plywood used at the bow. This gave the appearance of wood planking and gave the boat a sporty look.



This beautiful Jimmy Carter Craft powered by twin Evinrudes is shown ready for delivery. They were distributed throughout the southeast in the 1950s and 1960s.

3.0 PRODUCTION INFORMATION AND MODELS PRODUCED

- Carter Craft boats, which started in 1951, produced 12' and 14' fishing boats during early production. Starting in the mid 1950's they started producing 16' and 18' mahogany plywood runabouts. In the mid 1960's they produced a line of fiberglass boats, which never really caught on. They even produced a number of inboard-outboard 20' models at the end of production. Production lasted through the point when the company went out of business in 1969. The earliest runabouts were plywood, then they experimented with U.S. Rubber Royalite hulls for some of their boats. Tom Bingham, CC president, estimated that the company built 30,000 boats from 1951 through 1969.

- **MODELS PRODUCED AT CARTER CRAFT:**

- FISHING BOATS:**

- 12' and 14' "Fisherman" boats made from molded mahogany plywood, Royalite hulls and fiberglass

- RUNABOUTS:**

- 14' "Sea Lark" molded plywood boat used for cruising and water skiing. Molded plywood and Royalite hulls.
 - 14' "Fish N' Fun" runabout with a Royalite bottom. First offered in 1961.

- 14' "Coastal Compact" and "Costal Standard" runabouts which were very basic runabouts for 1961.

- 16' "Sea Hawk" called an "Overnighter" for it's ability to sleep two adults under the bow, and featured a convertible top which would secure the sleeping quarters from the weather.
These units cost approximately \$650 to \$850 in the mid to late 1950's. This information was obtained from Tom Bingham who was still living at the time. The Sea Hawk was featured in Evinrude and company advertising.

- 16' "Sea Flite" was offered in 1958 and featured no portholes in the bow. Designed for cruising, fishing and water skiing.

- 16' "Flamingo" was first offered in 1957 which was a molded plywood boat similar to the "Sea Hawk".

- 16' "Premier" a convertible cruising boat with a Royalite bottom. First offered in 1961.

- 18' "Sea Flite" followed which was a complete convertible cruising boat, and optioned with a marine toilet. Most boats were mahogany molded plywood. Dealers cost in 1958 was \$1,295.00.

FIBERGLASS BOATS:

- Fiberglass boats built in the 1960's were the (15' Sea Lark with a cathedral hull)(17' Sea Flite) and a (14' Fisherman)

INBOARD-OUTBOARD BOATS

- 20' "Sea Flite" built in the late 1960's featured inboard-outboard power with a fiberglass boat. I believe few were sold.
- Carter Craft used the very best in marine mahogany plywood and construction materials. In 1957 they started the plank boat bow design by making grooves in the plywood, and painting them white, similar to Chris Craft plank boats.
- By the late 1950's the production employees would layout 100 boats at one time and produce between 25 and 35 boats a week. By 1960 Crater Craft was producing 200 fishing boats and runabouts per month. By the mid 1950's the company had 70 production employee's which grew to 200 in the 1960's.
- Carter Craft developed a boat assembly line by the mid 1950's to produce the large quantity of boats. By 1960 50% of the boats produced had wood hulls and 50% had Royalite hulls.

- By the 1960's the company was a multi-million dollar business and this happened in 9 years. Ray Patrick quoted "that they got into the boat business at the right time when runabouts and water skiing was booming".
- Carter Craft boats had a distinctive and unique design and trim lines and along with the plank like grooves in the bow, and were a sought after boat to own.



Carter Craft – “Fishing Boat” 14’



1957 Carter Craft – “Sea Hawk” 16’ Runabout



1960 Carter Craft – "Sea Hawk" 16' Runabout



1959 Carter Craft – "Sea Flite" 18' Runabout

4.0 CARTER CRAFTS VENTURE INTO USING U.S. RUBBER “ROYALITE” HULLS

- Royalite synthetic material was supposed to be superior to plywood for making boat hulls. Carter Craft did extensive crash and durability testing which proved out well. In the end the Royalite would not hold the screws and fasteners and would pop out. In time the Royalite did not prove out and Carter Craft only built them for only a few years.
- The Royalite process was a 5 ply, vulcanizing process used for hull production.

UPDATED 9/24/2010



1957 Carter Craft – “Sea Hawk” 16’ Runabout
with U.S. Rubber Royalite hull

5.0 ADVERTISING, PROMOTION AND THE EVINRUDE CONNECTION

- Carter Craft boats were sold nationally with advertising in all major magazines. They were will represented at national water ski shows and competitions.
- Cypress Gardens used only Carter Craft boats in the national famous water ski shows in the late 50's and early 60's.
- During the 1950's, Evinrude outboard motors used Carter Craft boats to advertise the higher horsepower outboard motors in national advertising.
- Mercury outboards also used Carter Craft boats in testing their new outboard motors.

UPDATED 2/24/2010



LAUNCH A DAY
where—you are
depends that go
service . . . exper
pass along the
remedy a minor
gency to help



Hummmmm

revolutionary new starting ease

TAKE THE WORD OF EXPERTS . . . for most fun afloat, it's hard to beat the comfort and satisfaction a *big* boat gives you. A boat with the length, beam and depth to provide uncramped room for family and friends. A boat that can maintain speed and dryness in rough going. It was Big Twin's all-around *big load* capability that made such boats practical and popular. Now there are many such hulls to choose from. And still one top choice for power . . . Big Twin! Now, with Big Twin's increased horsepower there's added reason for deciding in favor of a *big* boat.

Because of an important new Evinrude development, Big Twin Standard requires even less effort to start than previous models. At the head of each cylinder is a compression relief chamber. The starting pull automatically opens a valve into each chamber, reducing compression by 40%. The instant the motor is running the valves close, automatically sealing the relief chambers and restoring full compression. In actual practice, Big Twin is as easy to start as the average motor of half the power.





LOW FRICTION V-4 POWER

World's smoothest outboard power—naturally "in balance" at all speeds. Provides the same smooth, overlapping power flow as the most advanced automotive V-8's. Inherently smoother, more rigid, with fewer friction surfaces, less torsional "whip" than in-line engines.



SYNCHRONIZED TWO-BARREL CARBURETOR

All the advantages of multiple manifolding without sacrificing the simplicity of single carburetor adjustment. Adjustable—requires no jet changes to compensate for altitude, humidity, or temperature. On Starlite II only.



NEW TAPER-LOK BRACKETS

Motor mounting brackets are bolted to the transom. Motor slip-locks into these brackets, automatically aligned.

TWO-WAY SHOCK ABSORBERS

Brand new to outboard boating. Evinrude shock absorbers cushion two ways; to absorb the shock when the motor hits an obstruction; to prevent "slamming" when the motor returns to drive position.



*a new achievement in sizzling power . . .
performance that puts you out front . . .
a motor you'll own with boundless pride!*

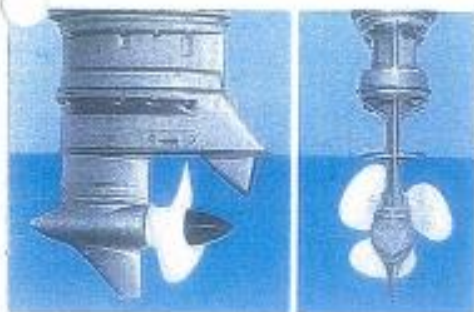
STARLITE FEATURES

- Low friction V-4 power • Jetstream Drive • Automatic choke • Synchronized two-barrel carburetor
- Taper-Lok brackets • Two-way shock absorbers
- Key-turn starting • Hi-Lift fuel pump • Sea-going magneto ignition • Thermostat-controlled cooling
- Super-Power combustion chambers • Boat-mated propeller • Sound-sealed fiberglass hood • Perfected underwater silencing • Safe-Grip clutch • Full gear-shift with forward, neutral, reverse.

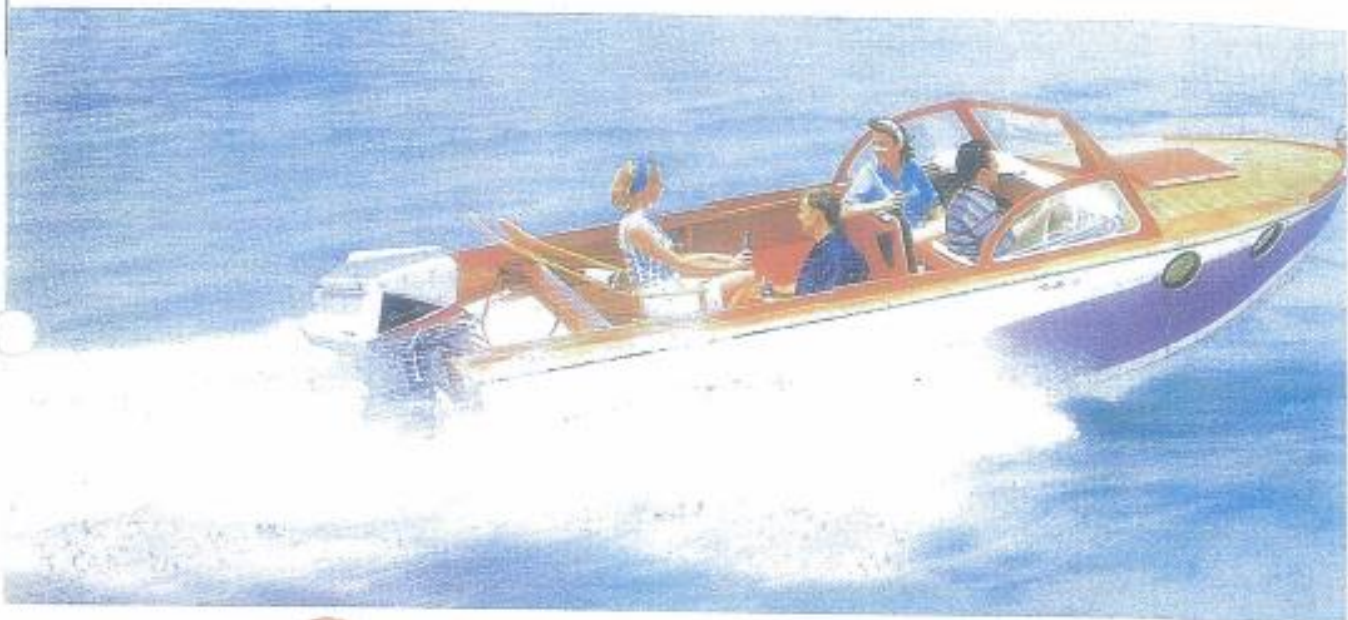
For detailed features, see pages 4, 6, 8, 10, 14



Jetstream Drive breaks the "drag barrier"



Evinrude's new fin-slim lower unit sets a new milestone in outboard progress. Just as jet planes changed shape as increased power boomed them to speeds beyond the sound barrier . . . so has the Starlite II lower unit evolved into a new shape to translate its 50% greater power into higher speeds. Jetstream Drive breaks the "drag barrier" without sacrificing control. Its slim gearcase houses full gearshift transmission. Here, for the first time, is a true high-speed lower unit with the safety and pleasure of complete automotive-type gearshift control.



Evinrude offers you the quietest, smoothest power afloat with sound-sealed, cushioned power! Powerheads are cradled in live rubber mounts inside sound-tight nacelles. Power pulsations are cancelled out at the source. Motor cover and mounting brackets are insulated from vibration. High-spiral gears are quieter because they provide continuous tooth contact, eliminating "high speed whine." Exhaust is jetted into the propeller stream, burying noise and fumes in the wake. We've left you only the magic quiet of Evinrude Whispering Power to enjoy!

We bottled the sound and sealed it!

We smoothed the ride to a glide!



35 spirited "horses!"



35 *quiet*
horsepower
OBC certified at 4500 RPM

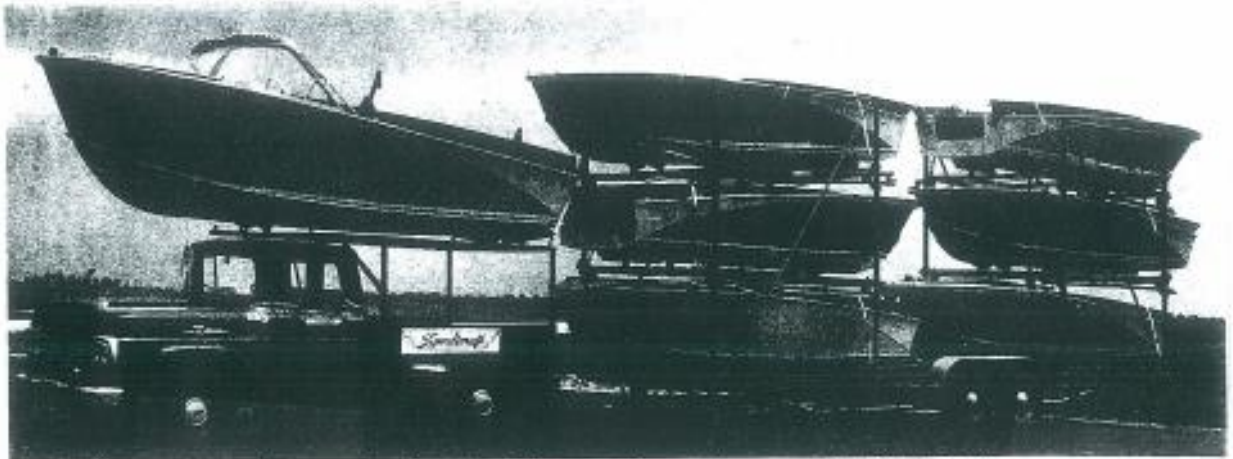
CONDENSED FEATURES: * New advanced-design, high-compression, alternate-firing twin * Slow trolling to over 33 mph on stock runabouts * New compression relief chambers on cylinder heads function automatically when starting; greatly reduce starting effort * Cruis-Throttle saves up to 20% of fuel at cruising speeds * Aquasonic engine mountings and powerhead silencing * Super-Power magneto * Waterproofed ignition * Rubber sealed Auto-Lift hood for instant accessibility * Centri-Matic cooling * Complete protection against corrosion—no flushing needed after salt water use * Transom Trigger trim adjustment * Trim-Lok prevents motor tilt-up when decelerating or backing down—automatically releases when an obstruction is hit * Safti-Grp propeller protection eliminates shear pin replacement * Idle-Matic throttle prevents accidental engine stall at idling speeds * Cruis-a-Day tank standard; choice of optional Cruiser Fuel System for boats with built-in tanks * Fitted for Simplex remote controls

For detailed features and specifications, see pages 28 to 31.



6.0 BOAT TRANSPORTATION INNOVATIONS:

- Peterson Bros. Inc., a Jacksonville, Florida trailer manufacture, developed a special boat hauling trailer system for Carter Craft to haul boats from their production facility to dealers around the country. They could load and unload trailers saving a lot of labor and time. It was so successful, that the parent owner, "Gator", went into mass production. The special trailer was named "Load-a-matic-transport" and had a capacity of 4,200 pounds. The year was 1959.



This seven-boat load solves delivery problems, with one man doing the whole job

8.0 WHAT IS LEFT AT CARTER CRAFT IN PARKER, FLORIDA:

- In late March, 2008 I traveled to Panama City and Parker to try and find out more about the company and what's left of the facilities. I talked to city representatives and people who worked at the production facilities. I took pictures of the Parker Baptist Church, where the production buildings were located. I also took pictures of an old Carter Craft boat storage building and an office they used.

UPDATED 9/24/2010



CARTER CRAFT BOAT COMPANY – WHATS LEFT TODAY – PHOTOS TAKEN 3/28/08

ORIGINAL COMPLETED BOAT STORAGE BUILDING & OFFICE – NOW USED BY A TREE SERVICE



***CARTER CRAFT BOAT COMPANY – WHATS
LEFT TODAY – PHOTOS TAKEN 3/28/08***

**ORIGINAL COMPLETED BOAT STORAGE BUILDING &
OFFICE – NOW USED BY A TREE SERVICE**



***CARTER CRAFT BOAT COMPANY – WHATS
LEFT TODAY – PHOTOS TAKEN 3/28/08***

**ORIGINAL COMPLETED BOAT STORAGE BUILDING &
OFFICE – NOW USED BY A TREE SERVICE**



7.0 CARTER CRAFT – CLOSE OF OPERATIONS:

- James Carter sold the boat business to his two partners in the early 1950's. A number of years later he started a new boat building business producing 14' fishing boats. The business was called "Carter Boats".
- The partners closed the Carter Craft Boat Company in 1969 at the Parker location.
- The business reopened a year later making fiberglass boats only. The company name was "Fun Craft"
- James Carter died on April 5, 1995, and is buried in the Parker cemetery, which is located across the street from the old production facility.
- Tom Bingham, the latest owner of Carter Craft passed away in 2009. His daughter's, Sue and Holly, have now purchased Carter Craft Sea Hawk runabouts and are in the process of restoring them

9.0 CARTER CRAFT BOAT REGISTRY

- We initiated a “Carter Craft Boat Registry” in 2008 recording Carter Craft boat owners throughout the USA. We currently have members from 13 states that are owners of Carter Craft boats.
- The registry is free, and you will receive a copy of it and Carter Craft boat updates throughout the year. It is one way on contacting other owners for restoration ideas, needed parts or interested in buying or selling your boat. To get registered we need the following;
 - Name
 - State which the boat resides
 - E-mail address
 - Year boat was produced
 - Length of your boat
 - At least one side picture of the boat
 - Serial number which is stamped in the dash
 - Boat name if any
 - Status of boat – in use, in restoration, in storage
- E-mail information to Bruce D.
(fabservcoinc@aol.com)

10.0 INFORMATION AND PICTURE CREDITS:

- James Gray – Parker Bayou Trawlers, Inc. –FL.
- Lee Wangstad – Boat Historian – MN.
- Sue & Jody Herring – Sue is Tom Bingham's daughter – FL.
- Bay County Public Library – Panama City, FL.
- Winston Chester – Author "Full Box" – FL.
- J. Kirkland – 1959 Sea Hawk 16' Runabout – LA
- D. Chesla – 1959 Sea Flite 18' Runabout – MN.
- D. Wetherbee – 1957 Sea Hawk 16' Runabout – MA.
- B. Danielson – 1957 Sea Hawk 16' Runabout – MN.

UPDATED 9/24/2010