

PREMIERE EDITION

March 2015

# CAROLINA *shore*

EXPLORING COASTAL CAROLINA



*face time with*  
RANDY RAMSEY & JARRETT BAY





Reel Quick, Hull #55

# carolina Flare

By Amanda Dagnino



Gregarious Hull #53

The *Sensation* is something of an icon on the Morehead City waterfront. The busy charter boat, captained by Dale Britt since 2006, can be spotted coming in and out of port daily, unloading its catch along the boardwalk to the delight of gathering tourists. Those seeing her for the first time may stop and admire her lines, the curve of her hull and the exaggerated flare of her bow that has become synonymous with Carolina boat building. To local residents, however, the floating artistry of the *Sensation* has a somewhat sentimental meaning as well – she is the first hull completed by Randy Ramsey and Jarrett Bay Boatworks.

“I am proud and humbled every day to be the owner and the captain of Jarrett Bay hull num-

ber one,” said Britt. “It’s a role that brings special meaning to me because I occupy a spot that Randy Ramsey used to hold.”

Carolina seas. Reminiscent of traditional North Carolina boats, the design is visually striking, almost showy at times. Its wide stance and flared hull garner attention. But it’s Jarrett Bay’s focus on power that brings high-dollar sportsmen to Ramsey’s office, including Nascar drivers Terry Lebonte and Jeff Burton, both members of the Jarrett Bay family. The shape of the hull gets some of the credit, Ramsey said, but more important is the weight to horsepower ratio, which they maintain through unique carbon fiber construction methods.

When the first hull was constructed, Ramsey explains, charter boats were about 45 feet in length, tops. The 53-foot *Sensation* was the largest boat in the Carteret County fleet when completed in 1988. She was modeled after vessels built by mentor Omie Tillett up the Outer Banks in Wanchese. It was also one of the first to be built

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Ramsey ran charters with the boat himself when it was launched in 1988. He and a small team of fishing enthusiasts built the boat in 13 months in an old shed in Williston with one thing in mind – constructing the best fishing boat possible. They had no idea what a sensation it truly would be. Nor did they imagine that it would still be fishing every day from her home on the Morehead City waterfront.

In its 28 years, Jarrett Bay Boatworks has gained global attention for its custom lightweight fishing yachts that match power and speed with high-end luxury. Attention is given to every detail, from the fighting chair to the hand laid wood in the cabin. Some sportsmen swear that the hull attracts fish like nothing else, while captains laud the design’s ability to cut through the oft choppy

exclusively with epoxy glue for the planking and construction.

“I explained what our goal was and Omie was kind enough to take me by the hand and help me figure out how to make it work,” Ramsey said. “We were using new materials, giving the bottom a different shape. What we were doing was almost unheard of at the time.”

Ramsey never intended to be a boat builder. He is, as he readily admits, a fisherman at heart. Spending his formative years in Down East Carteret County, his only goal was to find a career path that allowed him unfettered access to the water, fishing pole in hand.

“That was really all I cared about growing up,” Ramsey said. “A lot of kids aspire to be lawyers and doctors and I aspired to be a charter boat captain.”

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*The Sensation nears completion in a Williston shed.*



*Randy Ramsey & Capt. Omie Tillet.*



*Randy Ramsey, in yellow, is a self-professed fisherman at heart.*

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His uncle ran a charter boat service down in South Carolina when he was a child and nothing seemed more perfect. He was so driven to follow in his footsteps that on his 18<sup>th</sup> birthday, the day he was eligible, he tested for his first license, maritime studies complete and sea time already under his belt.

He has come a long way since taking his first charter offshore for a day of adventure. Jarrett Bay is now in the construction process of its 62<sup>nd</sup> custom fishing vessel, its largest build to date at 90 feet. While the hull shape has changed slightly and construction methods have been tweaked along the way – materials are lighter, stronger – the mission continues to be the same, to create a fully custom, hand crafted vessel ideal for fishing. No two boats are the same, the owner said.

The buy in is steep, upwards of \$10 million, he admits, and the family is a small one. The company has, however, produced a handful of 34-foot center consoles that begin in the mid \$300,000 range. While not custom boats, they do open the door to ownership a little wider. Counted separately from the custom hulls the company has produced, Ramsey said they've been well received.

Despite his success, Randy Ramsey continues to be a neighbor, a friend and an active part of the Carteret County landscape. He's approachable and affable, friendly and down to earth. He is, it's safe to say, on top of his game; from a shed to a multi-million dollar company in less than three decades. But like those that work with him daily, Ramsey remembers the humble beginnings from which he rose.

"You see the address out there, don't you?" he asks, referring to the signage for Jarrett Bay Boatworks' 175-acre campus along the Intracoastal Waterway in Beaufort, 530 Sensation Weigh. "There's a reason for that. We always want to remember where we came from. The 530 represents the 53 feet of our first boat and Sensation ... well, you know the story," he adds with a wry smile.

Given the luxury of the vessels that eventually emerge, nothing about the unassuming metal building that houses the boatworks speaks to the treasures created inside. There is, however, for those who look close enough, a small placard next to a large closed bay door that simply says "Hull 62."

The size of the bay alludes to what may emerge, but it's hard to imagine the sheer size of the vessel until you're standing over it. Fifteen to 20 employees work simultaneously on the hull, dwarfed by the mass of the boat. Any onlooker could tell that Ramsey likes this part – the moment when a civilian gets their first glimpse behind the curtain. He is proud of his accomplishments, and rightly so.

While the word custom brings a set of preconceived notions, it's hard to imagine that there isn't something that has been pre-fabricated, sitting on a shelf in a dark closet waiting for the next 50-foot boat to be commissioned. But that simply isn't the case at Jarrett Bay. Nor is there machinery or conveyor belts or anything to give the semblance of a factory. What there is, however, is people; craftsmen are hands on during every step of the process, from framing the hull to sanding the trim around the galley sink. It is a busy workplace, with two or three vessels in various stages of construction at any one point. The average build requires about 100,000 man hours.

"From beginning to end, the customer is consulted about every aspect of construction," said Ramsey, who equates the process to building a new home. "They're not just deciding how they want to power the boat and what electronics to include, they're also choosing their interior, the layout of the cabin, the amenities. We

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“We always want to remember where we came from.”



Casey Futrell photos







“It all comes back to the people in your life that make the difference. The relationship with customers and employees and teachers, but also the relationships with friends and family.”



Top, from left: Marilyn B (Hull 46), Bill Collector (Hull 15), Sensation (Hull 1), Below: Marlin Fever stopping by the yard for work during the off season.



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communicate with them a lot. Some people are surprised by that, but that’s how we do things. Customer service, individualized customer service is an important part of being in the Jarrett Bay family.”

To aid in the build process, Jarrett Bay Marine Industrial Park is home to a family of outlying companies, all within walking distance of one another. Some businesses are under the auspices of Jarrett Bay’s umbrella, while others lease space and partner with Ramsey during the design and build process. On-site, clients have access to an interior designer, a custom tower builder, major marine engine companies, a marine electronics provider and more. In addition to new construction, the marine park services and repairs all makes and models. Its location along the Intracoastal Waterway makes the park accessible, even for larger boats.

“We also have a parts store that is open to the public,” said Ramsey. “Our goal is to be a one-stop for boaters, whether they have a small fix, or they need a complete overhaul. One of the things, I’m most proud of is the amount of

talent we’ve collected here in one location. We have boats that come back each winter for work and we have customers who just run into trouble on the Waterway and need a quick repair. There aren’t many places where a boater can come find this many services in one location.”

The craftsmen who work with him are among Ramsey’s most important relationships.

“It all comes back to the people in your life that make the difference. The relationship with customers and employees and teachers, but also the

relationships with friends and family,” Ramsey said. “Along the way we were extremely fortunate and that relates back to those relationships.

“Then some of it is just chance,” Ramsey said. “I’m sure there are a lot of great singers in the world who haven’t had the opportunity to sing in front of the right person. I happened to be lucky enough to sing in front of a lot of the right people at the right time.”

And they liked what they heard. CS

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