

PROFILE

At Wilbur Yachts, it's all about quality and customer service. This focus has earned the Southwest Harbor-based custom boat builder a reputation for excellence that is recognized far beyond the New England coast. According to John Kachmar, president of Wilbur Yachts, the best part of the business is delivering the final product. "The look of pride and satisfaction on our owners' faces when they take possession of their vessels is priceless," he said.

Kachmar and his wife Ingrid took over the helm from Lee Wilbur and Heidi Crock, Ingrid's parents, in 2001. Wilbur and Crock started the company together in 1973 and quickly established a solid demand for Wilbur yachts among serious boaters.

"We don't build many boats, but we build them very well," said Kachmar. "Simply put, our boats work. The Wilbur 34 is now up to hull number 70."

This attention to detail has earned Wilbur a loyal following. Wilbur's newest project, a 38 footer slated for completion this fall, is for a couple who has owned four Wilbur yachts previously.

"The typical Wilbur customer is an experienced boater," said Kachmar. "Many are transitioning from sail to power, but they like the feel of a keel. The seakeeping ability of a Wilbur hull gives them a comfortable ride and



John E. Kachmar
President, Wilbur Yachts

allows for more exploring, but they still feel as if they are on a real boat."

Wilbur Yachts specializes in Downeast, or lobster-style, hulls, a trademark among Maine boat builders. Its boats range from 28 to 70 feet in length, and almost all of the boats Wilbur constructs are built to order. The company, which employs 15 people, handles four to six new builds annually in addition to its upgrade projects.

The company has also constructed research vessels for the Smithsonian and The Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, the largest independent oceanographic research institution in the United States.

Like other American boat builders, Wilbur must compete with firms building boats overseas, where looser environmental and labor regulations enable them to offer their product at a lower price. Despite this challenge, Kachmar is very optimistic about the future of boat building in Maine.

"Right now, we are one of the only manufacturing sectors in the state that is still growing," he said. "The opportunity is immense, and the state has recognized how strong our industry could be. Without the help of the state, the Maine Built Boats, Inc. (MBB) would have never gotten off of the ground."

In March, Maine boat builders, with assistance from the state, formed MBB to unify the industry and establish it as a global leader. Its goal is to take the current gross revenue of \$650 million to \$1 billion plus within the next decade.

"Five years ago, the formation of MBB would not have happened, but people are beginning to understand we can't do it all by ourselves. As a small builder, I see opportunities being presented to me that I would be hard pressed to find without this type of organization," Kachmar said.

"If you are a boat builder in Maine and haven't seriously considered this organization, you are missing the boat." ■

MESDA Partners With TRADEPUB.COM

Maine's Software and Information Technology Industry Association (MESDA), recently announced that it has teamed up with TradePub.com, to make it easier to access a comprehensive library of industry-specific free trade publications. As part of the partnership, TradePub.com has agreed to provide the MESDA user base with the ability to subscribe to more than 200 trade publications in more than 25 distinct industrial sectors. For more information, call (207)829-9195 or visit www.mesda.com. ■

Maine Made Site Honored

The Maine Made Web site (www.maine-made.com) received one of the top honors at the annual Maine Software Developers Association awards gala receiving the "Best Arts and Entertainment Web site" award.

The Maine Made site is a dynamic directory that features over 1,000 program members producing a wide range of quality goods and services right here in Maine. The site was designed and is maintained by the Augusta based X-Wave. ■

STAFF NOTES

- Dann H. Lewis, Director of the Office of Tourism, has been appointed to a three year term on the Travel and Tourism Research Association (TTRA) Board of Directors. The TTRA is an international network of more than 800 travel and tourism research and marketing professionals.
- Phil Savignano has been hired as the Office of Tourism's Senior Tourism Officer. Welcome, Phil!