

Jim Locking and Paul Bell scrub boat at Vandestadt and McGruer

Sun-Times photo by Bruce Rutherford

Launching largest model was high point for yacht builders

By RALPH ADAMS
Sun-Times Staff

Launching their newest and largest yacht model in the "S" series into the business world last October at the Chicago Boat Show was the high point of a successful 1976 year for Vandestadt and McGruer, yacht builders and designers, of Owen Sound.

Since then the firm has built 10 Sirius sailboats and has received 90 orders for the model through the Chicago show and the Toronto Boat Show in January, 1977.

The Sirius, on the drawing boards since early last year before the prototype was built, is 21 feet long with a beam of seven feet, 11 inches and a draft ranging from 16 inches to five feet. There are bunks for five persons, each better than six feet long and head room varies in the hull from four feet, nine inches to six feet, four inches.

This moulded fibreglass sailing yacht is unsinkable and its 2,000 pounds weight is easily transported on a boat trailer of suitable length. The company backs a two-year warranty on this model.

"We are tremendously pleased with the way this new yacht has met acceptance with sailing men," Fraser McGruer said.

Mr. McGruer said the firm had a good business year in 1976 with the 16,000 square-foot plant on West Shore Road extremely busy during the first six months. He said there were a few weeks of tapering off but by mid-summer the work picked up to full production again.

Besides the 10 yachts made in the new Sirius class, the 40 employees of the firm turned out a total of 628 boats in the other four series models to surpass the 1975 figure of 560 boats.

The Siren (17 feet, 2 inches) led the production with 389 to be followed by the Skunk (11 feet, 1 inch) at 99. There were 92 Spindrifts (13 feet, 4 inches) made with the small Shrimp (9 feet, inches) accounting for 58 models.

Over the same year the company sold 126 craft as agents for California Shipbuilders.

Touching on the role of an agent Mr. McGruer said the company has made arrangements to introduce the MacGregor Catamaran 36 to Georgian Bay sailors this coming summer. It is made by the MacGregor Yacht Corporation, Costa Mesa, Calif.

"It sails like a dream," Mr. McGruer said. "We tested it in the Pacific Ocean near where it was made and its twin hulls with over 2,000 square feet of sails travels up to 30 miles an hour."

Each hull has two bunks and the 36-foot craft can be bought complete for about \$15,000.

Mr. McGruer said the Canadian boat builders are still in a favored position similar to last year when they paid two per cent taxes importing craft to the United States while the American makers are still paying 17½ per cent levy

bringing their merchandise into Canada. He said rumor has it that the Americans may be granted a reduction to 15 per cent tax sometime in 1977.

In the supplies department, the yacht builder said the company still uses about 30,000 pounds of resin each month, along with large quantities of fibreglass and special wood trim. He said all supplies are readily available and, in step with

other commodities, have risen slightly in price over the past year.

Over the past year the Owen Sound firm increased its Canadian dealership network to 37, up from 31 dealers in 1975, which sell their products coast to coast, Newfoundland to British Columbia. At the same time it has retained its 25 United States agents in Florida, Michigan, South Carolina, Virginia and Rhode Island.