

Knowing the ropes

A CLOSER LOOK
AT ONE OF OUR MEMBERS



Mark Hood, Hood Marine Canvas, Merrimac, Mass., with his brother, Chris (left), and his father, Bruce (right).

He is a Certified Master Fabric Craftsman, a member of the Marine Fabricators Association (MFA), IFAI and the North East Canvas Products Association (NECPA).

www.hoodcanvas.com

Mark Hood didn't just grow up around boats; he's the nephew of renowned sailor and boat builder Ted Hood. His uncle and his father, Bruce Hood, were both successful America's Cup sailors. "I didn't give it too much thought," Mark Hood says. But he learned enough to do some offshore cruising, making many trips from his home base in Marblehead, Mass., deep into the Caribbean.

And it wasn't always smooth sailing. "I've seen some pretty rough weather. One passage to Bermuda we had 40-foot seas and 60-to-80-mph winds. It's like going up and down mountains. You kind of surf down the waves. You have to be tied into the boat, because if you lose somebody, you're not going to get them."

His boat made it through, but at least one other boat took a knockdown—when the boat goes completely over on its side. "It comes back up," he says, "but it can be frightening." Coming into Bermuda, that crew panicked, abandoned the boat and swam for shore.

There were rewards, however, "In that particular storm, we

went through the eye of it. That was pretty neat because every marine animal you can imagine—whales, porpoises, flying fish—follows the eye of the storm. They instinctively know."

Going ashore

All this real-world experience has been extremely useful to Hood in his business doing custom canvas work for high-end boats, many of them built by his brother, Chris (CW Hood Yachts), in nearby Marblehead. "I find that when I'm making a dodger for a boat that's going offshore, I build it differently than for a coastal cruiser. I always find out how the owner is going to use the boat—from "weekend condominium" to offshore fishing—and figure out the best design. It doesn't matter if it's a sailboat or a power boat."

This careful attention to detail was one reason he pared down his operation to just two people. His wife, Deb, took an early retirement and now works with him. "I used to have seven people working for me," he says. "If you're not there in the shop to watch over things, mistakes happen. After seven or eight years of doing that, I said 'that's it.'"

Sharing the knowledge

The Hoods also run a marine canvas school, which he describes as "hands-on and very comprehensive in scope," keeping class size to just four or five students at a time. "I like helping people out," he says. "I love the people I meet teaching. We meet people from all over the country, and some are very interesting characters." He is concerned, however, about the future of the trade, since his classes are "mostly older people. It kind of worries me a little bit that young people aren't getting into the trade."

Hood has a talent for writing as well, contributing regular articles to *Marine Fabricator* magazine, and he's working on a book about marine canvas fabrication.

He regularly attends the Marine Fabricators Association national convention to see what's new and exchange ideas. "I always pick up things to learn," he says. "The networking is the best part."

He'll attend his first IFAI Expo in Boston this year.

BY JANET PREUS, EDITOR | Specialty Fabrics Review

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