



**BEFORE RELOCATING TO FLORIDA,** Jim Moores owned one of the oldest boatbuilding shops in the country: R.S. Colson Boat Works in Lubec, Maine, founded in 1886. Though Moores no longer speaks with that distinctive Maine accent, you can't take the Maine out of the man. He still has the telltale strong-willed personality, the no-BS attitude, and, fortunately for owners of classic wooden yachts, the Yankee work ethic.

Among the discerning group of classic yacht owners, Jim Moores is a familiar name. On some yacht restoration projects Moores often has a longer relationship with the boat than its owner—on the Trumpy yacht, *America*, he worked with the yacht's five successive owners. Owners are inclined to drop off their yacht, have a friendly chat with Moores, then jump in the car and take off; such is the level of trust. "We are not over-leveraged, over-financed; we are a family owned business based on old-fashioned American values" he says.

Jim and his wife Stephanie run the office, ship supply store, and boatyard at the Riviera Beach, Florida location, while brother-in-law Nathaniel Smith takes charge of the second location, opened in 2007: the 18-acre Moores Marine Yacht Center in Beaufort, North Carolina. These days they find themselves in the enviable position of having to hire additional workers. In Florida, they are busy working on the 93ft Defoe-designed Presidential yacht, *Honey Fitz*, having recently launched *Stately Lady*, a 72ft Trumpy. In North Carolina, work is proceeding on the 1939 Mathis/Trumpy *Washingtonian*, the 1929 Consolidated *Justice*, and the 1965 75ft Trumpy *America*. *Honey Fitz* and *Washingtonian* are both pre-war yachts, undergoing refits at the same time in two different states by the same company. Moores feels this could be a first.

During his 30-odd years in the restoration business, Moores has watched as many of the one-of-a-kind classic yachts either get cut up by boatyards as a result of abandonment or sink, their owners unable to afford the cost of maintenance that wooden boats demand. Every week his office fields calls from frantic owners or a boatyard (not wanting to look like the yard that demolishes historically significant boats) seeking his advice in an effort to preserve these relics from a bygone era.

For a man as passionate about vintage yachts as Moores, their rebirth becomes his personal quest. At the moment, he's on a mission to find a new owner for a 1919 Mathis/Trumpy, *Grand Lady*. At 52 feet, she is one of the few remaining small Trumpys from that era. Her owner could not afford the restoration costs, but kept *Grand Lady* preserved for 26 years, building her a boathouse while he lived humbly in an adjoining house trailer. After his death, his granddaughter took up the cause to find *Grand Lady* a new owner; a deal fell through and now time is short.

Unable to find an owner for a 1912 Mathis/Trumpy boat, *Ibis*, which ultimately was destroyed, Moore salvaged the deckhouse, which now serves as his wife Stephanie's office at their North Carolina shipyard. You've got to love the guy.

The history of these iconic vessels that have become the foundation of Moores' restoration business is fascinating. In the early 1900s, dredging was not widespread in areas other than those surrounding the major harbors of Boston, New York, and

Philadelphia. With engines and technology still primitive, naval architects such as Trumpy and John Wells focused on shallow-drafted yachts and the art of design. "It wasn't just about pushing a boat through water with the least amount of resistance," Moores explains, "they created the artful design first, and then developed the science to achieve their goals." But the world as they knew it changed after World War II; anxious to shed the patina of those war-torn years, the new culture demanded efficiency and power. Shedding tons of steel resulted in lighter engines and higher horsepower, and many wooden boatbuilders were faced with the prospect of leaving the business as Defoe ultimately did, or consolidating.

Despite the romance that these classic beauties evoke, classic restoration projects require a serious monetary commitment, something inexperienced boaters are not always willing to accept, regardless of their initial intention. Moores is realistic, "Boats are dreams; that's the bottom line," he says. "If you take the dream out of the boat because the restoration costs have become a horrible hole that all the money flows into, the owner becomes overwhelmed, the enjoyment is gone, and he doesn't want it anymore."

In lieu of undertaking a monumental restoration project in

one sitting, Moore suggests a step restoration to many owners, wherein every four years a major part of the restoration is undertaken, interspersed with two years of light maintenance work. "For larger boats we recommend a continual restoration," he advises. "We address the safety issues first, then proceed with one section at a time, dependent on the owners' budget and timeline. What's the sense of having a boat if it's going to sit in the boatyard for years? We encourage owners to use the boat first before they make decisions regarding changes and modifications."

While on the subject of safety, Moores complies with the 1979 Lloyd's Standard for Wooden Boats, noting that insurance companies no longer take the word of the owners' surveyors, preferring to send in their own surveyors. "I have been trained as a traditional boatbuilder; we locate and construct back to the original blueprints. The biggest problem with these boats has been bad repairs, one on top of another, until she is no longer safe."

Moores does have his favorite among the many projects he's worked on during his career—the Trumpy yacht previously called *El Presidente*, now *Innesfail* (see page 192). He owns an original Rosenfeld photograph of the yacht, which will grace the walls of one of his Trumpys. There are two other projects that he considers bench- ➤

# National Treasures

Sometimes in life you have to make the leap, like boatbuilder, Jim Moores, who followed his dream from the back woods of Maine to Riviera Beach, Florida, where he now restores classic yachts from America's bygone era of yachting.

STORY BY GRACE TROFA

Moores Marine (bottom right); John F. Kennedy Presidential Library (top right)



## HONEY FITZ

The Defoe-designed *Honey Fitz* was the presidential yacht, favored by John F. Kennedy, who named her after his maternal grandfather. She was sold at auction, and her new owner sees himself as the steward of the boat, having attended prep school with JFK. "She was built as an ultra light boat, 93 feet long," says Moores. "But over

the years, the boat had settled and the bow had twisted about 15 degrees to starboard, and there was a hog running through the keel. We are replacing a large section of the center—50 feet on both sides. Twelve steel pipes have been welded to her engine beds, where six motors hang on pipes and jacks. There are eight pipes that go through the hull to lift

up the weight of the deckhouse. The challenge is to support the upper structure while you are deconstructing and reconstructing the bottom."

While working on the boat, Moores, who has worked on 24 Trumpy projects, kept finding details that were, to his knowledgeable eye, Trumpy details: the inset panels on the sides of the cabin, the joinery work, the

window lifting crank... Research revealed that she was originally designed as a commuter boat, however, Trumpy was brought in to convert her to a yacht. "Over the years she was single-planked; she looked like a badly sided house," remarks Stephanie. They are restoring her back to double planking, using full-length planks of Douglas fir, 80 ribs per side.

marks for his business: *Honey Fitz* and *Summerwind* (see sidebars).

Moore says that when you love what you do, it totally absorbs you. He snail mails, not e-mails, a monthly newsletter, to his community of classic yacht aficionados. He is connected to the information highway we know as the Internet, thanks to his wife, Stephanie, who sees to it that they Twitter, blog, and post YouTube videos. In fact, it was due to the benevolence and trust of one of his readers that Moore recently found himself on the shortlist of inheritors and subsequently the new owner of the 61ft Trumpy *Aurora II*, one of six owned by John Trumpy equipped with all the details he personally favored. It was the last Trumpy to be built in Camden, New Jersey, and the first to be launched in Annapolis when Trumpy relocated his facilities. Moore likes to call it the “last of the first Trumpys”. In view of the fact that they already own a 46ft Trumpy, *Jacqueline*, Stephanie is keeping a sharp eye on *Aurora*’s restoration budget, curbing her husband’s enthusiasm.

“As time goes by, there are less and less of these boats,” reflects Moore. “I had to take a good hard look, back in the 1980s when the first round of cutting up these boats began, and decide if this boat restoration was really a good business; I felt the writing was

on the wall. But I made the decision that I wanted to restore only American boats, and secondly I wanted to start restoring only boats that are worthy of the amount of time it takes to restore them. You put the same amount of time in something that’s not worth saving as you do with something worth saving; that was the turning point.

“The caliber of the boats I am working on now—*Summerwind*, *Justice*, *Honey Fitz*—represent what I dreamed about doing my entire life. And now I am actually doing it. It’s not just a business to carve out a living, I really love these boats and want to see them preserved for future generations, so that people can see and appreciate the craftsmanship. When you take these boats apart, you uncover where the craftsmen have scribed their names, so proud that they have had a hand in building these boats. We get calls from people saying, ‘my Dad worked on that boat’. There is such a legacy with these boats; it’s heartbreaking to see them crushed and tossed away.”

Stephanie jokes they have a two burner “bar” at the Moores Marine office. Stop by, they’ll keep the coffee on for you.

Contact **Moores Marine**, [www.woodenboatrepair.com](http://www.woodenboatrepair.com). ☐



Cory Silken (left), Moores Marine (right top & bottom)

## SUMMERWIND

The restoration of *Summerwind*, a 100ft 1929 John D. Alden schooner, was a 22-month project that included total hull replacement. The team at Moores worked 60 to 70-hour weeks to get her reconstructed, faired, and painted, launching ahead of schedule last February.

Her Texan owner had a dream to win a race with a schooner. He had commissioned one to be

built in South Africa, but when he told his buddies at the New York Yacht Club, they scoffed that she wasn’t a real schooner because she was made of steel. Undaunted, he searched for an American schooner, found one in Spain, repatriated her, and went on to win in her first race at the Newport Bucket, taking first place in the Grand Dame class.

“Initially we were to replace sections of the boat, but once

we got into the reconstruction, it became apparent that the entire bottom needed to be replaced,” says Moore. “We discovered the same kind of problems when we got to the topside: she was not built as a high end boat. The boat was ‘iron sick’—the oak had been eaten up by the deterioration of the iron.” The decision was made to replace the hull but keep the interior intact.

They brought in Alden Design

Group’s naval architect, Niels Helleberg, who incorporated stainless steel into the construction so that when raced hard, there was no risk of the boat pulling itself apart.

One of Moore’s craftsmen carved the scrolls and core strip by hand on the new hull and presented the owner with the original Alden-designed scroll at her launch—the only remaining part of her hull apart from the keel.