

Custom Steel Boats – A Family Affair

Feeling like taking a sabbatical from work and sailing around the world? Or how about just sticking closer to home, perhaps yachting it up and down the east coast? Either way, if you've got the time, and of course the financial wherewithal, Custom Steel Boats can bring your dream vessel from concept to reality.

Founded by father and son team Richard and Rodney Flowers in 1981, the company originally specialized in sail boats, but expanded into steel trawlers (i.e. yachts) in 1992. By 1994 business had grown to the point



Boundless '90 High Speed House Boat

where a larger facility was needed. The company opened its 17 acre establishment in Merritt, NC where they remain to this day. Since 2003, following the untimely passing of Richard Flowers and his wife, the company has been run by Rodney and his sister Teresa.

Custom Steel Boats first came to Firwin in 2009. "We were sitting around the table at lunch, and Rodney was flipping through a trade magazine when he came across an advertisement from Firwin Corp", recalls Teresa Flowers, who wears the company Vice President title. "He gave me the magazine and said 'Here, you should call these people, this is a product that some of our customers could use'. So I did, and we have been doing business with Firwin ever since."

Custom Steel Boats uses Firwin removable insulation jackets to cover the exhaust piping and components in the engine room. This helps to keep the heat in the engine room down to manageable levels, and protects personnel from burns should they brush up against the exhaust system.

The 'Boundless 90' is one of the company's higher end yachts where Firwin's removable insulation blankets can be found. The ship is an example of the high end craftsmanship and quality product that Custom Steel Boats has become



famous for. Completed in late 2008, the vessel is a 90 foot high-speed



house boat, powered by three 720hp Yanmar Engines. "Although house boats of this type usually only have 2 engines, the owner wanted a high-speed house boat



capable of speeds of up to 40 – 45 miles / hour", said Teresa Flowers.

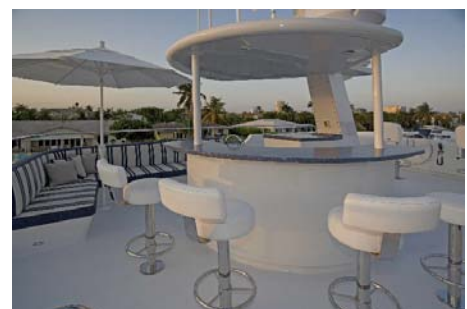
Firwin provided the insulation covers for the Cowl mufflers and accompanying exhausts for all 3 engines.

Engine room of Boundless '90 - Firwin blankets on mufflers and exhaust piping for three 720hp Yanmar Engines

The 'Custom Steel 82' is an example of a more traditional twin engine powered vessel. An 82 foot long range cruiser powered by twin Cummins engines, it is



more rugged and durable than a house boat.



As in the Boundless '90, Firwin insulation jackets can be found in the engine room covering the exhaust piping.



Engine room for Custom Steel '82 - Firwin Insulation Blankets on exhaust piping of twin Cummins engines

As the price for these boats typically run into the millions (the Custom '82 recently sold for \$5.3 million), what kind of clientele does Custom Steel Boats attract?

“Our typical customers are not the super-rich celebrities”, notes Teresa. “They are what I would call your ‘average’ well to do businessmen, who have been very successful in their careers and now want to take advantage of a lifestyle that a custom yacht can offer”.

The company has been branching out into other areas such as commercial rigs, and is currently completing the Mary Musgrove, a 67' T-Class passenger ferry, for The Chatham Area Transit Authority in Savannah, Georgia.

So you would think that the Flowers would be avid boating enthusiasts, perhaps commissioning a boat for themselves to cruise up and down the Carolina coast? “Ironically, both my father and brother are boat enthusiasts who do not like being on the water”, said Teresa. “Daddy started off as a wood boat builder and always liked building boats, but never liked being on the water, and I guess my brother Rodney takes after him.”

Sort of like saying that Ben and Jerry don't like ice cream – but since most of the company's customers come from word of mouth, clearly the lack of enthusiasm for being out on the water has not dampened their customers' loyalty to a company known for its top quality workmanship and design.

“Custom Steel Boats are a pleasure to deal with”, notes Joash Katsivo, Firwin’s design engineer who has worked closely with Teresa on a number of projects. “We have a lot in common with them as we both are family owned businesses with 2 generations working in the company. Also, their boats are so amazing to look at, it is a real treat to design the insulation blankets for them” added Joash.

We at Firwin wish the folks at Custom Steel Boats continued success, and we look forward to continuing to play a small part in bringing these special vessels to the market.

For more information on Custom Steel Boats, please visit their website at www.customsteelboats.com .

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