

Demystifying Scottie-Craft A Researched History

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Era One (1953-1958) The Scott Years

The Scottie-Craft story is said to have begun when John Charles Scott, Sr. built a boat for himself and gave it the name SCOTTIE after gaining more than 20 years of experience in the development of outboard engines and boats, including work in allegedly secret government labs during World War II. He entered it into the 1946 Annual Biscayne Bay Regatta, and it finished first in the C Service Runabout Race. Scott continued to build six more SCOTTIES over the ensuing years, each one becoming faster than the one before, earning himself more than a hundred Gold Coast Marathon APBA sanctioned race trophies and a well-deserved reputation as an exceptional outboard racing authority.

Having only made boats for himself up to this point, Scott made the decision to take his experience and expertise and manufacture a boat for public offering. So, he joined forces with Eugene C. Lowe, Jr., former general manager of Emancipator Boats, and Russell Specht, well-known for his design of custom-built boats¹ and to later become VP and general manager at Bertram Yacht.² Several years afterward, the renowned boat designer, Walt Walters of the later-famous Don Aronow's Walters/Wynn Formula design team, would get his start as a draftsman by also joining Scottie-Craft.³

The initial team of Scott, Lowe, and Specht experimented with design after design for years before coming up with a boat that accomplished their objectives of designing and constructing “a boat of popular size and type that would out-perform any boat in her class—at a price within reach of many, not just a lucky few.” They acquired a half million-dollar plant in Miami, and in 1953, the first Scottie-Craft Outboard Cruiser was launched.

It was an 18' plywood outboard express cruiser⁴ offered by parent company, International Shipbuilding Corp of Miami, also owned by Scott.⁵ This outboard express cruiser came in both cabin and utility models, and versions with inboard motors installed were also available.⁶



Scottie-Craft Demonstration @ Lauderdale Marina

Early advertisements referred to them as “the World’s finest outboard express cruiser(s)” and stated that these models made “sensational sales history” in this first year. According to the company, the “Outboard Express Cruiser” received many improvements, and a newly designed and more glamorous boat was unveiled the following year.⁷ Scottie-Craft continued this business model of improving and redesigning the Cruiser for the next couple of years, while adding 19’ and 21’ versions to line-up.

Up to this time, all Scottie-Craft were plywood cabin cruisers with essentially the same format and layout. However, the addition of 16’, 18’, and 21’ open utility runabouts in 1957 marked the first deviations since 1953.⁸

In 1958, replacing its 16' utility runabout, Scottie-Craft offered its first "fiberglass" boats, the 15' "Corsair Deluxe" and the "Corsair Custom",⁹ making Scottie-Craft one of the early companies to make the switch from wood to fiberglass.¹⁰



Ad of Scottie-Craft's 1st fiberglass offering. Argosy Magazine, 1958 February Issue.

These boats were a more modern and major design departure from what Scottie-Craft had previously produced. It is believed that these are some of the first boats that Walt Walters worked on.

Era Two (1958-1969) The Brown Years



*Jack Brown with his record breaking 859lb tuna out of the Gulf of Mexico
Photo courtesy of Zane Brown*

Despite all their successful innovations and early step into the upcoming fiberglass boat evolution, Scottie-Craft found itself in financial difficulties.¹¹ Towards the end of 1958, Jack A. Brown bailed Scottie-Craft out and bought it from bankruptcy. At the time of the purchase, Brown was an avid fisherman who captained the Sea Hawk, a 45-foot sport fishing boat that he designed and built in New Orleans and charted out of the Bakers Haulover Inlet docks in Miami.

With the purchase came the company name, factory, a few fiberglass molds and some wooden boats.

Jack became the new guiding force behind Scottie-Craft boat design thanks to his expertise in fishing and his graduation from the Heron School of Art and Design.¹² Since

Scottie-Craft had already taken its first foray into fiberglass construction, Jack would direct the entire Scottie-Craft line to now on be produced in fiberglass.

He began production in 1959 at the 1815 N.E. 144th St., North Miami (Hialeah) factory and an additional plant located on Beecher Street in Indianapolis, Indiana. This additional facility was the re-purposed former location of the Indianapolis Wire Bound Box Co. plant,



Rendering: Scottie-Craft Building 1815 NE 144 St, N Miami

previously owned by Jack's father. However, the cold Indiana winter temperatures did not work well with the resins being used, so he soon shut down the Indy plant and focused on Florida.

In 1959, N.E. 188th St. in North Miami (Ojus) was no more than a dusty and barren dead-end road about a half-mile long that was built on once marshy land. For the most part it seemed undesirable, but Jack recognized that it was almost perfect for a boat building facility, since it was bordered on both sides by canals that flowed into Biscayne Bay on the Intracoastal Waterway, just a few miles north of Haulover Cut with its access to the Atlantic Ocean.¹³

So, he made plans for a new factory building with office space on the second floor to be built there.¹⁴ The design and construction supervision of which was by John Young. Young, a self-taught engineer, wore many hats at Scottie-Craft and was general manager, lead designer, and marketing manager all-in-one.¹⁵ Once the building was completed, Jack moved all boat production there. He lived on the canal behind the

factory in his personal houseboat identical to the one in the 1960 to 1962 Surfside 6 TV series.¹⁶ As an aside, this houseboat's tenants after Jack, were Linda Boreman, better known as Linda Lovelace, and her infamous husband, Chuck Traynor. It is purported that this was one of their residences from 1971 to 1973, but that's a whole other story.¹⁷

There were no other structures nearby at the time of the plant's construction. However, several years later in 1962, Formula Boats built their plant down the street, followed by Don Aronow's other plants for Donzi, Magnum, and Cigarette in the subsequent years. With these high-performance additions, the once quiet street became better known as the famous "Thunderboat Row."¹⁸



Vacant, former Scottie-Craft Plant on Thunderboat Row, 1991. Screenshot: VÉHICULE Magazine

Years later in 1967, Jack opened the Gold Doubloon.¹⁹ It was a swanky steakhouse and lounge with a piano bar and live entertainment.²⁰ It was located less than 2 miles from the boat plant on Biscayne Blvd in what is now known as the Marina Palms Yacht Club on Maule Lake.²¹ With Thunderboat Row nearby, it was a popular spot for boaters.²² Jack would take advantage of its location in the marina and advertise boat models would be available anytime for demonstration and inspection at the restaurant.²³

Being a farm boy from Indiana, Jack hated office work but rather enjoyed working with his hands. This meant he spent much of his time laying up fiberglass and creating new models next to his employees,²⁴ many who were Cuban immigrants that fled from the early years of Castro's take-over. They were all conscientious workers who "took great

pride in building what they declared to be a quality product where cost was not sacrificed for profit.”

With this philosophy, Jack in charge, and Young's guidance, Scottie-Craft experienced years of growth and success. Claims have been made stating that in the mid 60's, odds were that out of the majority of boats in use in South Florida, every other one was a Scottie-Craft.²⁵

The boats won numerous awards at the Miami Boat Shows and were regarded by many as being on par with Bertram and Chris Craft.²⁶ According to many firsthand accounts, these were well-built, solid, heavy, and seaworthy craft. The word “tank” is often used in their description because when it came to running these boats, wave height didn't seem to be much of a deterrent.

The product line contained leisure and pleasure craft, but obviously due to Jack's passion for fishing, Scottie-Craft's main focus was more on the serious fisherman. The first few years saw all models being 20 foot or under, but as time and Scottie-Craft innovation progressed, so did the length of the boats.

Over the years, a variety of vessels between 15 and 37 feet in length had been produced (see accompanying spreadsheet), the majority of which were open center consoles with features and innovations that were considered well ahead of their time.



1968 Miami 37 Sports Fisherman Flybridge

Era Three (1969-1973) The Walker Years

The July 1969 issue of Motor Boating magazine reported, "In a crafty move, New York-based CVR Industries, Inc. purchased Miami's Scottie-Craft Manufacturing Company. Jack A. Brown, Scottie-Craft's former owner, will continue as Consultant and Chief Designer."²⁷ Seemingly as gratitude for the integral role he played in Scottie-Craft's success, it is said that Brown contracted that his right-hand-man, John Young, would also be kept on for at least a year as part of the deal.²⁸ It appears ownership of the Gold Doubloon restaurant was also part of the purchase.²⁹



Photo of Hank Walker wearing sweat band at 1960 Democratic National Convention in Los Angeles.

CVR Industries is reported to have been owned by Henry G. (Hank) Walker, a former photographer with over a dozen Life Magazine cover photos during his time with Time-Life from 1949 to 1963. He was also assistant managing editor for The Saturday Evening Post from 1963 to 1965.³⁰ In August 1970, it was announced that Walker would come on as the new President of Scottie-Craft Boat Corp.³¹

Along with Walker came a support team of seasoned professionals. Peter Guerke was named the new VP & General Manager and Bill (Rosebud) Melody was designated Sales Manager and Director of Dealer Services. Pete, formerly of Miami Beach Yacht Corp., had designed the first Formula for Don Aronow, while Rosebud was Regional Director of Dealer Relations for Bertram/Whitaker.³² This team obviously replaced John Young at Scottie-Craft, who was

guaranteed to be kept on. Instead, Young was assigned to work at the Gold Doubloon restaurant for that promised year.³³

While owning Scottie Craft, it is said that Walker had a boat built for Jacques Cousteau.³⁴ Further information about this period of Scottie-Craft history has yet to be learned. Rumors are however that Walker purchased Scottie-Craft only to bury it as a tax write off for CVR Industries' other investments.³⁵ No matter if there is any truth or not to that rumor, the last boat to be produced in the Scottie-Craft facility was just a few years later in 1973.

Sincere gratitude goes out to Zane Brown, son of Jack Brown, and Gerald Young, son of John Young. Without their generous sharing of extensive personal information, much of Scottie-Craft's history would not have been uncovered.

The information in this article has been gathered in a novice research effort spanning the course of over two years and verified by no less than Scottie-Craft sales brochures, magazine articles and advertisements, online articles, online obituaries, official sites, and electronic communications with former Scottie-Craft employee family members and contemporaries from the boat manufacturing industry.

If you have any further information or photos you would like to contribute, please contact matarlton@write.me.com.

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