



## WINTER NEWSLETTER 2011

Well, I think it is safe to write this letter now since we all have experienced a good mess of winter in the Northeast already. Isn't it great?

The St. George River is icing up, and the ducks are huddling together, trying to keep from becoming the eagles' next meal. But, the Four Seasons are good for us, as they keep our families tight, allow me to putter in my "man cave," and make time for good books and getting those inside projects done. If it were warm here year round, Maine would look like Florida!

This has been an exciting winter for us here with some new crew, new customers, and fun projects. We are carrying less inventory, watching our pocketbooks, and cleaning house. To that end, we are revamping the loft above our shop and putting a used outboard parts center there. A good used part from our inventory will usually cost you less than one half the price of a new one and will carry our own warranty. We will have rebuilt lower units, starters, carburetors, and whatever else we can properly sort out from the collection we've accumulated. We look to make a nickel and save you one, too!

There are goings-on in the neighborhood, as well. Scott Yakovenko (former chef at the Dip Net in Port Clyde) has bought the Harbor View Restaurant (across the river) lock, stock, and barrel. He puts on a good meal, so this should be fun and a welcome addition to Thomaston Harbor.

Accompanying this newsletter you will notice a flyer explaining fuel-tank flushing and fuel polishing. Many of you have already used this Maine-based service through us, but I recommend that *all* built-in tanks be cleaned, due to the introduction of ethanol fuel. The process is not expensive (usually under \$200), and it eliminates a lot of problems in our short boating season, when downtime is a nightmare.

Our policy on storing fuel is to make sure that the gas is stabilized and that it's inspected for contamination before the engine is started in the spring. Some marinas and boatyards are emptying all fuel tanks before storage, but Yamaha recommends filling each tank to at least 7/8 of its capacity to keep condensation down. I will do either on your boat, so let me know your thoughts when the 2011 season is over this year. I prefer to use fresh gas in the spring, but the time and expense of pulling out the stored fuel and the cost of replacing it prevents me from making a firm policy on this.

Our sales and marketing manager, Chris Cornell, who started with us last March, is a welcome addition to this business. He comes from an extensive marine background; loves to fish, hunt, and write; and is a good, honest man. He once worked for my competition (Stetson and Pinkham) but bought a Parker 18 from me, as he knew it was the best boat for his needs! I can now take some time off knowing that I have a very qualified man here. This is my 35<sup>th</sup> year of opening the doors at Jeff's Marine!

Chris spearheaded the introduction our new Crowley-Beal 23, which is a very affordable, down-east classic. Here is what Chris has to say about it: "Every once in a while—maybe three times in my nearly 50 years of experience on the water—a boat comes along that's just 'right' in every way. The Crowley-Beal is such a boat. Her looks, trailerability, and fuel economy are all terrific, but it's her sea-keeping ability that's truly extraordinary. This Calvin Beal hull is dry, it doesn't pound, and it turns on a dime—no matter what the sea conditions."

You may have noticed that, thanks to Chris, we have a new website ([www.jeffsmarine.com](http://www.jeffsmarine.com)), and it was much needed, as my crew is pushing me into joining the new world. Please do not think you are going to contact me on Facebook, Tweet me, or text us for work you want done! That said, we do accept e-mails, and our phone still works.

Actually, my daughter—Kathryn—who will be running the office for us through the 2011 season, has put together a Facebook page for Jeff's Marine! There, you can see photos, post news, and chat with Kathryn. She has plans for next fall, but it should be fun having two Armstrongs here this summer—as long as she remembers that *I* am The Boss!



I am really blessed to formally recognize Brian Henningsen, a fine outboard technician who came to work in the main shop last April. He has an extensive background in marine outboards and sterndrives. Having helped his family operate a marina in New York, Brian is a very welcome addition and is responsible for most of the engine repair here. No one can ever replace Elwin ("The Lord"), who gave me 20 great years, but Brian is certainly a godsend for us. He does each job right the first time and keeps the quality of our outboard service top-notch.

Last summer, we took on a Cushing man, James Fales, who is now a key member of the yard crew. He is a lobsterman at heart but is going to be here full-time with us this season, hauling a few traps on the side. James's skill in moving and blocking boats, and his knowledge of the water make him perfect for us.

Darrin, Mark, Larry, Toby, Steve, Carl, and Niki round out a really good team, whom you have come to know, like, and depend on. Josh has moved on to new horizons, and we wish him well. I will miss his energy and willingness to tackle anything. I am blessed to have such good people to work with, past and present, and I think it is important to recognize the guys who really make it happen.

Yamaha Outboards has proven to be a great line for us and for our customers. It was a smart move for me to take them on back in 1985. Who would have thought 20 years ago that almost the entire range of motors would now be four-strokes, with electronic fuel injection and laptop-compatible ignition systems?

At Jeff's Marine, it is our job to be the best we can be at what we do, which is maintaining and repairing outboards and small boats. I believe we have met this challenge with a well-educated crew of techs and a knowledgeable service manager at the helm in Darrin Richardson.

We lost a few good boaters this year, including Lee Prescott from Thomaston, who loved to work, play, and mess around with boats. Carlton "Red" Miller from Tenants Harbor passed away, too. He and his family had a good run at the Cod End restaurant, and Red made his mark hereabouts with his lobstering, hunting, and fishing. We also lost Sanford Lipson, whom a lot of folks will miss seeing every day over coffee on the dock at Port Clyde.

I would also like to mention some still-active, over-80 boaters and longtime Jeff's Marine customers. Wick Skinner from St. George owns the 25 Parker *Come Along* and has had many boats during his lifetime. Wick has been an asset to my pocketbook and those of numerous other boatyards. Although not quite as active on the water, Paul Andrews from Cushing still gets out when his boys take him. John Blackford is still crashing around Muscongus Bay, and Ed Danforth still looks forward to returning to his camp on West Grand Lake each year.

I also want to mention Walter McNamara Sr. and Walt Jr., as they are two of my oldest customers and are treasured friends, as well. It is these relationships of 20 and 30 years that make working at this place a joy, as we strive to help people live their dreams. If I have missed one of our "golden" boaters or a passing, please let me know, as we want to honor these people.

Last year we hosted a Summer Solstice party here on "the deck." It was a fun time and we want to do it again, so please put on your calendar **June 18 at 5 p.m.** Kathryn tells me she'll send out a e-mailing in advance of the party and will post a notice on Facebook, but I will have an old-fashioned sign-up sheet here, too. Don't miss this rain-or-shine event! The party is a way to say thank you, to feel blessed for what we have, and to enjoy the company of fellow boaters. I will have oysters, our own smoked salmon, and Larry Wilcox's mixed grill. The whole Armstrong family will be here, and I hope that all of you can attend.

So there it is: Another year has gone by, and we are still boating and enjoying this wonderful coast. The price of fuel is up a bit and the economy is still recovering, but I have a good feeling about this country, its people, and our ability to work through the tough times. We are privileged to have grown up in such a wonderful land, being free and able to make our own choices.

Many of you who receive this letter are longing to return to Maine when the leaves emerge again. Others—including the strong, hardy, and independent commercial fishermen—are still using their boats to bring in the catch. (I am really enjoying the Maine shrimp harvest on winter weekends.) This place has special meaning for all of us, and I am glad to have been part of it.

Thanks for letting us serve you. It is you who make this place possible.



Jeff