

THE REAL MIZ SCARLETT

There's nothing shy and retiring about these Southern Belles



Mary Ann Bonsey is a character, a steel magnolia with a distinctive, smokey drawl who, like her favorite fictional character Scarlett O'Hara, figures out what she wants and gets it. Ask her about growing up in rural Georgia and you'll likely hear a story about sitting in her neighbor Miss Lillian Carter's kitchen, swapping jokes with Secret Service men during a reception in Plains, or how the former president—she calls him 'Jimmah'—rode his bicycle around town even though it sent his bodyguards into a frenzy. Her stories are so rich I almost forget I drove across the state to talk to her about her boat, well, her boats actually because you can't get to the present one without out some understanding of the first two.

Her late husband, Frank Bonsey, a suave hospital developer and former Thistle champion who split his time between St.

Petersburg, Florida, and Atlanta, once handed her a wad of cash and said, "Mary Ann, why don't you and your mama go down to the Miami Beach Boat Show and buy us a nice boat."

"I remember asking him what kind of boat—I didn't know anything about boats—and he said, 'oh, you'll learn and you'll know what I want when you see it.'" Mary Ann spent two weeks in Miami going on every boat brokers showed her. She picked out a classic motoryacht. Frank flew down and agreed it was just right. However, a survey found "rot and critters" in the wooden hull. "So that's when I decided to learn about fiberglass," she says.

Long story short, she found a 55-foot Californian that met

By MARILYN MOWER • PHOTOS BY SCOTT PEARSON



SPECIFICATIONS

LOA: 78' 2"
 Beam: 20' 4"
 Draft: 4' 10"
 Displ.: 100,000 lbs.
 Fuel/Water: 3,520/600 U.S. gals
 Power: 2 x Caterpillar C-32
 ACERT @ 1,800hp
 Top/Cruising Speed: 32/28 knots
 Range: 2,500 nm @ 8 knots

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At 1,850 pounds, the SmartForTwo car on the upper deck (above) weighs less than many RIBS and better meets the needs of her southern owner, Mary Ann Bonsey (top right). The all-teak interior and the red, white and blue exterior paint scheme are her few concessions to tradition.



their needs. When Frank balked at naming the boat *Miz Scarlett* after you-know-who, she settled on *Blue Topaz*, her favorite gem. The pair ran the boat themselves for 17 years.

In 1993 Frank Bonsey passed away. Mary Ann moved to Florida and spent more time on *Blue Topaz*, but it wasn't the same. She started looking for a new boat, flipping through magazines. Her eyes lit on something she liked. "I called my broker and said, 'I want to see a Marlow.' He made an arrangement for us to go down to Snead Island. I looked at a few and then I climbed on a seventy footer in the brokerage fleet, and that was it. I said, 'I'll take it' even before I talked to my banker or my lawyer."

The first thing she did was rename the boat *Miz Scarlett*. The second thing she did was hire a captain to help her cruise into her new life. Capt. Tad Joy and Mary Ann generally cruise

one week of each month, sometimes dock hopping locally, sometimes moving the boat in stages.

Builder David Marlow cultivates a family atmosphere among his owners and counts two single women yacht owners in his fleet. (The other is Dot Wade with the 57-foot *Never Better*.) But even he was surprised when Mary Ann called him up and said she wanted to build a new 78-footer.

Since the boats are very similar in their appearance and arrangement, the obvious question was, "What do the extra eight feet give you?"

Mary Ann was quick to answer, "It wasn't so much the length, although [Captain] Tad's got nice quarters now, but we gained two feet of beam, I got a private stairway to my stateroom and I finally have a boat that's all mine."

Of course, there are some advances and enhancements between the 70-footer and her new boat. You don't have to look hard to find a few of them, such as the day head on the aft deck—Mary Ann calls it the outhouse—a compressed air assist for opening the huge hatch to the lazarette, the large sit down bar on the upper deck, which is bracketed with misters for cooling, and the four-wheel tender. Yes Mary Ann's tender is a Smart Car convertible.

"I like to dock hop, I don't anchor out much so I don't really have use for a dinghy," she says. "When I get some place, I want to go to dinner—you notice I have a big desk instead of a dining room. At first we looked at a golf cart, then an electric car. The problem was, how would we keep it charged up once we took it off the deck. That could take a mighty long extension cord. Then Tad saw the Smart Car. We gave David the dimensions and he said he could make it work."



Mary Ann chose a large desk and an expanded seating area in place of a dining table in her saloon (upper left). There is plenty of alfresco dining on the upper deck and a small snack table next to the helm.



The owner's stateroom (upper right) continues the lighthearted animal print touch. Black granite counters define the galley. The hatch in the galley overhead provides access to flybridge electronics.



Making it work entailed creating a design for carbon fiber box beams in the boat deck to distribute the weight of the car and its crane. Marlow's full-stack infusion construction process already increases laminate stiffness, so the addition of the box beam avoided external supports. On deck the mini-convertible rests on a stainless steel and carbon fiber platform. A simple bridle attaches to four lifting points to swing the car down to the dock. By altering placement of some pieces of heavy equipment, Marlow was able to compensate for its effect on trim without resorting to ballast.

"Rather than adjust by ballast, which just slows down the boat, we adjust the placement of heavy items such as batteries, freezers, tanks and the like during design," said Marlow's Ron De Rocha.

After all, speed, and the Flag Blue Awlgrip finish on most yachts bearing the Marlow badge, were high on the list of features that attracted Mary Ann to the model. Despite her traditional look, *Miz Scarlett* cruises at 28 knots, a bit slower if she has Mary Ann's 28-foot Hydra-Sport, in tow. Of course, the Hydra-Sport is named *Rhett*, after you-know-who. 🐾