

FULL SPEED AHEAD

NEW AND IMPROVED: FORGET WHAT YOU KNOW ABOUT PONTOON BOATS. THIS IS 2017 AND THE NEWEST MODELS AVAILABLE AT WMF WATERCRAFT & MARINE WILL RIVAL THEIR MOTORBOAT COUNTERPARTS ON THE OPEN WATERS THIS SUMMER.



At WMF Watercraft & Marine in Millsboro, you won't find stereotypical, dated pontoon boats. Owner Bill Forenski only carries the very latest, state-of-the-art models from Avalon and Tahoe — and they're sleek, stylish and fast. As one of the top-10 dealers in the nation, Bill sells a lot of pontoon boats — but his greatest satisfaction comes from providing outstanding service to his customers.

WRITTEN BY BRIAN SHANE

PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY AVALON PONTOON BOATS

ROOM WITH A VIEW: IN ADDITION TO THEIR POWERFUL PERFORMANCE CAPABILITIES, AVALON PONTOON BOATS FEATURE SPACIOUS INTERIORS DESIGNED FOR ENTERTAINING FAMILY AND FRIENDS DAY AND NIGHT.



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What propels boat salesman Bill Forenski's philosophy on customer service and easy buying? It starts at the car dealership. That's right: the car dealership. Why is that, you ask? Well, it's because Forenski hates the process. For him, car shopping is a tedious, all-day event.

As a hugely successful pontoon-boat retailer at WMF Watercraft in Millsboro, Forenski has found a better way. "I try to make it really easy to buy boats," he says, "because I don't like buying cars."

Pontoon boats certainly navigated their way from the boxy party barges of decades past. You're not stuck with dull aluminum or grandma-green carpet as options any longer. They've evolved for the 21st-century customer, from materials and upholstery to the motor and electronics. They handle more like

real boats, and they're just as fast or faster. While the average price of a pontoon is \$30,000, some high-end models sold by WMF are priced between \$150,000 and \$180,000.

Once your WMF boat arrives, "We'll take you out, and we'll show you how to do things," Forenski said. "We'll bring it to your dock; we'll get it out on the water; we'll show you everything."

Today, Forenski and WMF Watercraft are honored annually as one of the Top-10 retailers of Avalon and Tahoe brand pontoon boats. But success didn't come overnight. In fact, he didn't even want to be a boat salesman — he fought it tooth and nail. For years before the business took off, Forenski was content being a Delmarva Power meter reader who happened to fix Jet Skis on the side.

"My parents had a beach house in Pot-Nets," he recalled as a 14-year-old growing up in Wilmington, "and my dad bought these Jet Skis — and they broke. I said, 'I want to fix them myself.' I had

no idea what I was doing. I blew up a lot of motors, but I learned. Then, people on the beach started coming to me and asking if I could fix their Jet Skis."

This went on for years. As a young man, he would read meters all day, then come home and fix Jet Skis into the evening. He found himself making house calls in his little Ford Escort to fix Jet Skis. He started doing repairs from a marina, then out of a little shed on Route 1. The business grew. Finally, in 2004, he had a chance to buy property in Millsboro, to open a bona fide repair shop. He later bought another shop down the road, where he and a crew took on boat repairs.

Five years ago, Avalon and Tahoe pontoons came to him with an offer. They wanted him to start selling their boats.

"I told them no!" Forenski says. "I was scared of the boats. I was scared of floor plans. I didn't know pontoons, and I didn't want to get involved in the business." ☺



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The next year, though, he capitulated. Avalon let him dip his toes in the water, so to speak, and sent him five boats to sell. He sold them all in three weeks, "and I was hooked," he recalled. "So I started ordering boats from them like crazy."

"I was selling a lifestyle, families out there enjoying themselves. It was neat. It was no longer a broken Jet Ski. It was like selling a dream to somebody. I really enjoyed that," he says.

Having stopped fixing Jet Skis altogether, he became No. 8 in sales by his second full year as a boat salesman. For 2015 and 2016, he was Avalon Tahoe's No. 3 salesman in the country. Today, Forenski says WMF Watercraft has grown 500 percent over the last three years, with locations in Millsboro and Oak Orchard, and a staff of 10. They service every boat they sell, and when customers upgrade to a new boat, WMF

sells your old boat on consignment.

Most weekends these days, you can find Forenski on the water with customers, over at Paradise Grill in Pot-Nets. He's on his pontoon, hanging out on the sandbar or maybe giving rides on fancy demo boats from the manufacturer.

Most important to him, though, is that WMF Watercraft is a massively customer-based business. If there's a problem, he handles it personally. And Forenski is proud to say that his customers buy boats from him, "not some sales guy."

"The biggest part about selling a boat is taking care of the customer *after* you sell it," he says. "That's more important than anything else." 🌊

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WATER WONDERLAND: WMF WATERCRAFT MODELS OFFER MORE THAN SPEED, AS THEY COME COMPLETE WITH THE LATEST MARINE TECHNOLOGIES AND RELAXING COMFORTS RARELY SEEN ON PONTOON BOATS.

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