

Grandfather pioneers family's boat business

BY GINA ALVARADO

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Wes Hudson proudly carries his wooden boat model across the room with delicate care. He does not want to damage his first design, which he believes is destined to become an original 42-foot-long offshore boat.

Hudson is a 24-year-old architecture major at Texas A&M University — a young age to be designing his first boat. But he remains 55 years behind his grandfather Willis I. Hudson, one of the first manufacturers of fiberglass boats in the United States.

With his original boat designs, the grandfather started Shallow Sport Boats Inc. almost 40 years ago. The company started out selling approximately one boat a

month, Willis Hudson said. Now, 2,500 boats later, Shallow Sport Boats Inc. sells eight to 10 boats monthly, and its Web site claims the company is the "The Cadillac of shallow water bay fishing boats."

"Fiber glass was real new on the market at that time. ... It went from there," said the 79-year-old company founder. "My son took it over and now my grandson is stepping in. I put my two cents in every once in a while, but I am just sitting on the sidelines."

Rex and Connie Hudson now run Shallow Sport Boats, along with their children Maria and Wes and their nephew Isaac Mayfield.

The company manufactures its boats in warehouses next to the family home in

Bayview before selling them to retailers.

"My dad plays the manager role, my mom acts like the bookkeeper, Ike (Isaac) is like the shop foreman," Wes Hudson said from his living room/office. "He takes care of the shop and I mostly manage the Web site."

The shop consists of three warehouses in the Hudson backyard, each containing four to five workers assembling boat parts.

Shallow Sport Boats Inc. offers six models: a 15- and 20-footer with no sides, an 18- and 21-footer with sides, a 21-footer modified V model and a 27-footer tri-hull offshore-inshore design. The newest design, which is not complete, is the 20-foot double tunnel quadrahedral hull shallow sport without sides.

Wes Hudson, who helps run the company during the summer, did not initially plan on taking part in the family business. In high school he intended on studying medicine, but after graduating he knew his future was with the Shallow Sport Boats Inc.

"Working with your family ... things run smoother, there is no red tape," he said. "It is either yes or no instead of waiting for paperwork to be processed. You can trust them, you know they're not stealing or running off with all your money."

But he said there's one downfall to working for a family-owned business.

"There is too many chiefs and not enough Indians," he said. "Everyone wants to be boss."