

# What do you call a boat that has a back porch?

## One's waiting for a name at the Summer Boat Show

THE SUMMER BOAT SHOW — Willis Hudson was teetering on the conclusion that he needs to hire himself a vice president in charge of naming stuff.

He hasn't come up with a name for the unique vee-entry, reverse-chine-funneling-strake tunnel hull that form the basis of the 18- and new 20-foot Shallowport scooters.

He doesn't quite know what to call the revolutionary aft-only tunnel that has transformed the old Falcon Grande bass boat into a shallow running, yet sea-kindly, 17-foot bay boat.

And he sure as heck doesn't have a name for the crazy-clever back porch he installed on the 20-footer just hours before the show opened Tuesday.

"I guess I'm just a generic kind of guy," he said.

In truth, Hudson is one of the pioneers of the fiberglass boat, albeit one whose operation has never gotten too big to respond to his customers. This new, new 20-footer is a case in point.

"One of the guides down at South Padre is running a Shallowport and where he docks, he has to anchor the stern out," Hudson said. "The waves come from that direction and the back fourth of the boat stays wet."

That gave him the idea of decking the sponsons. The 20-footer, unlike the flush-deck of the more traditional 18-foot scooter, has sides that put the gunwales 11 inches above the deck. It's self-bailing and the deck is sealed against swamping, but water coming over the stern — which could also happen backing down, or coming to a sudden halt and being overtaken by the wake — was a nuisance factor.

But then someone else mentioned that it would be nice to be able to walk around *behind* the outboard when you're fighting a fish. Thus, the Shallowport Porch, or whatever, was born.

It has a hinged plate that rides up on the lower unit and allows the outboard to be trimmed up.

And quick leap from a shallow hole is ensured by the sponsons plus the special cavitation-plate extenders — for which Hudson also doesn't have a name — that act in concert with the unique nozzle-like (and unnamed) tunnel exit to



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mold a bulb of water for the shallow-running prop to bite into.

The partial tunnel on the nearby 17-footer is in the process of being incorporated on a 25-footer to answer the prayer of many a Texas offshore fisherman, especially those running out of San Luis Pass: a bluewater boat that will run shallow!

Instead of continuing the deep vee all the way to the transom, where it provides fuel-sucking drag and puts your lower unit in a precarious position, you simply force the water back up through a tunnel aft — thus reducing draft and providing the prop with a protected cubbyhole in which to run.

All of these innovations are the product of a lifetime in the vanguard of small-boat design, starting back in 1949 with the highly respected Falcon line.

As if to prove the point, down the aisle came Howard Horton, taking an opportunity to cruise this

inaugural Summer Boat Show before helping to man the Lowrance booth — and it turns out that Howard is an old customer of Hudson's. Now a sort of spiritual leader among charterboat captains, Horton started his career in a fondly remembered 23-foot Falcon Malibu named *Gambler*.

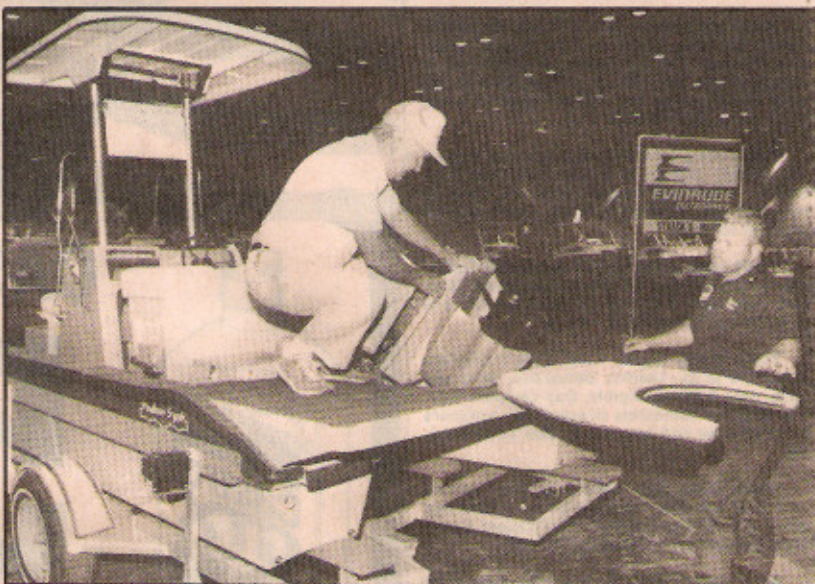
"The Malibu still is one of the most stable 23-footers you can find," testified Horton.

Hudson sold the company in 1971 and bought it back in 1978.

Meanwhile, he had been down in South Texas dabbling in the emerging scooter technology. With son Rex at the helm, Hudson spawned the Shallowport line, with an innovative vee-entry that took the pounding out of a shallow-water skimmer, in a separate operation down south.

Show price on the new "back-porch" Shallowport is \$17,500. It's on display at the W.W. Marine exhibit, space 309 in the main exhibition area of the George R. Brown Convention Center.

Lots of boats of all sizes are on view at the new Summer Boat Show, which continues through Sunday. Hours are 11 a.m.-10 p.m. through Saturday, 11 a.m.-6 p.m. Sunday. Tickets are \$4 for adults, \$1.50 for children under 12.



Post photo by Grace Saenz

Pioneer boat builder Willis Hudson shows an old customer a new wrinkle — the walk-around fantail. Howard Horton, right, a well-known Galveston captain, started his charter business with one of Hudson's earlier models.