

A Tribute to Mike

by Captain Don Fleming

“If you love what you do, then you never have to go to work, not even for a single day of your life.” These words, spoken by Mrs. Ginny DiForio, his beloved wife and partner, at his memorial service, sum up the life of Mr. Michael J. DiForio, President of Charles Point Marine in Peekskill, and Vice-president of Surfside 3 on the Hudson, the local Sea Ray Dealership in Charles Point and Haverstraw Marina.

Mike loved the water, loved boats, and loved encouraging others to discover his passion. His vision was to help as many people as possible get out on the water and have fun, especially families, and especially kids. He drew upon his own childhood boating experiences and developed his niche in life as a marina owner and boat dealer as a natural way to keep his enthusiasm alive and to share it with others.

THE EARLY YEARS

He was a “marina rat” at age ten. It was a different era then. The yard, Mamaroneck Boat & Motor, was a small “mom and pop” operation owned by a Mr. and Mrs. Duderman. They didn’t mind the neighborhood kids hanging around picking up the occasional odd job sanding, painting, doing just about anything to be there; and Mike was geographically well positioned to take full advantage of the situation, living only a block from the water. “Hooked” as a kid, he had a small Boston Whaler by age twelve with a forty horsepower outboard, ridiculously large for the time, and he would race around the local waters to his heart’s content. Once hooked, there was no stopping him.

Mike continued to work at the marina service department and later in boat sales throughout high school and while attending New York Institute of Technology. After graduating with a degree in Engineering in 1972, he took over the entire sales operation and ran it as MBM Marine Sales until 1990. He met Ginny there in 1971, and they married the next year.

THE MOVE TO THE HUDSON

In 1990, the two moved from Mamaroneck to Peekskill and established Charles Point Marine, originally a Formula and Chaparral dealership. In 1993, they changed to Sea Ray by forming an affiliation with Surfside 3, and opened Surfside 3 on the Hudson with show rooms at Charles Point and Haverstraw Marina.

Mike, who had an instinct for things mechanical, was the behind the scenes guy. He loved engines, the bigger and more powerful the better, and there was nothing he could not fix.

THE MAN HIMSELF

Above all, he was honest. You always knew where you stood with Mike, and people respected him for his integrity. He



Mike and Ginny DiForio.



Mike and grandson Michael Thomas at the helm.

believed in high quality service and built his reputation around it. The numerous awards: New Dealer of the Year, Top Ten Dealer, and Sea Ray Ambassador Dealership, all built on stringent and demanding customer satisfaction ratings, speak for themselves. After all, the guy was doing what he loved. So he did it right, and he did it enthusiastically.

Most importantly, Mike loved his family: his wife Ginny, his son Michael C., his daughter Jennifer Aiello, her husband Tom, and his two grandchildren, Michael Thomas and Ryan Kath-



Mike and Ginny relaxing in the cockpit.

erine. Mike brought his son Mike up through the family business as soon as he was old enough to scrub a deck. Today, after many years in all facets of the operation from sales to service to management, the younger Mike is well prepared to continue the family legacy in the place of the master who taught him so well.

Besides boats, Mike loved fast cars and motorcycles. He was a Corvette and Porsche guy, and he loved to talk with other mechanics on the river about his favorite cars, bikes, and boats. He told me years ago that his retirement dream was to buy a Fleming 55 Trawler with the Portuguese bridge, and do the great circle route. He also loved skiing, and he traveled to the Rockies for the deep powder almost every winter, returning with great stories to tell us at the Hudson Valley Marine Trades Association (HVMTA) meetings.

THE DEDICATED PROFESSIONAL

He was a charter member of HVMTA back at the start with Artie DeMarcus of Westerly Marina, the first president, and Frank Zoller of Zoller Marine Center, the first treasurer. When Frank passed away, Mike took over as treasurer. He remained at that job for over twenty years, and kept such a tight fist on the money that it's still a standing joke in the organiza-

tion. In 2002, Mike was selected for the HVMTA's highest honor, *The Frank Zoller Memorial Award* for integrity in and dedication to the marine trades, boating safety, and customer satisfaction. For more information on this award see my article "Boating on the Hudson Publisher Recognized for Excellence" in the March, 2009, issue of this magazine on my website @ www.captaindonfleming.com.

As Charlie Gruetzner of Oceanis Marine, the current president of HVMTA said,

"Mike's dedication to the group and its members will be hard to beat. He gave 200% to help the organization grow, to help keep us on track, and to remain focused on what is important to boating in the Hudson Valley. His insight, experience and strong belief in boating will be sorely missed."

Simply put, Mike was a great guy. He was one of our own, and those of us in the marine trades will miss him greatly. So will the many boaters who caught his wave of enthusiasm for boats and his love and respect for the water.



Mike J. and son Mike C in earlier years.

Charlie Gruetzner added, "The sun rises a little brighter on the Hudson now that Mike is looking down at us."

Michael J. DiForio: June 2, 1947—March 26, 2009.

Rest in peace brother.



Mike and Ginny aboard their boat.

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