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## 'Boaterz n Bikerz' combine for nationwide tour

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I have two passions in life: Boating and motorcycling.

I fell in love with boating as a teenager when my dad bought his first 19-foot wooden sailboat with a small trolling motor; we used to sail for hours all around the waterways of Northwest Florida. I had friends whose folks owned a ski boat, so when dad and I weren't tooling around, I spent weekends water skiing and camping with their family. I've kept that flame and family fun alive over the years as a boat owner myself.



Seven years ago, an industry colleague of mine, Jim Krueger (formerly of Mainship and now with Regal Marine) took me for a ride on the back of his Harley right smack dab in the middle of Bike Week in downtown Daytona. That ride from St. Augustine to Daytona ignited every cell in my body as we rode through scenic A-1A with a purplish-orange sunset kissing the horizon and then into the twilight madness of Main Street. The next day I signed up for a 'Learn to Ride' motorcycle class; five weeks later, I bought my first Harley. Life has never been the same.

There are lots of similarities between boaters and bikers.

It is from this foundation that the concept of *'Boaterz n Bikerz Across America: A Hull of a Tour'* was born. I know quite a few folks in the boating industry who are avid motorcyclists and who share my love of boating and the back roads. I hatched the idea about combining these two passions into one epic adventure. A little encouragement among colleagues and friends was all that was needed to plan a tour that would fulfill the No. 1 dream on my bucket list. Boating industry sponsors were secured and thanks to Jim Krueger, an awesome ride of nearly 3,000 miles was routed.



For 10 glorious days this past May, a group of 21 boating industry folks and enthusiast friends who love motorcycling crossed the country. We started in Destin, Fla., at the headquarters of host Legendary Marine – *Boating Industry's* 2012 Dealer of the Year. Legendary Marine sponsored our captain's party at the Legendary Yacht Club, with boat rides to Destin Harbor for dinner. Next we visited Natchez, Miss., where we toured Antebellum homes, and then through the downtown destruction zone of Dallas, where we navigated breathlessly to

Lake Grapevine and Silver Lake Marina, where Marinas International hosted us aboard Miss Tejas, a 90-foot party boat. We enjoyed kicking off our boots for a delightful and relaxing sunset wine and cheese cruise. Next, it was off to Lubbock, Texas, and then to Santa Fe, N.M., with a stop in Madrid, the sleepy little mountain town where the movie "Wild Hogs" was shot. We climbed 10,000 feet to the spectacular slopes of Taos where we experienced snow, hail, sleet, rain and lightning, all within three hours. And then our merry band was off to Farmington and to the Grand Canyon where we rode the spectacular rim! That evening, the Motorcycle Industry Council toasted our group with a sizzling steak celebration dinner in Williams, Ariz., hosted by rider Cam Arnold from the MIC, herself a former 20-year marine industry marketing executive. We spent an afternoon and an evening in Vegas catching shows and the nightlife, then cruised to Palm Desert via the Mojave Desert and grueling hot 107 degree conditions. We were all especially grateful for our transport

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vehicle sponsors, My-Villages and Southeast Marine Sales & Service, as the ability to stop in the desert and gulp down bottles of water off the truck was a lifesaver!



Our final trek wound through the lush San Jacinto mountains with plenty of twists and curves, taking us to our final stop and splash down in San Diego, compliments of South Coast Yachts. Their crew treated our exuberant riders us to a barbeque feast, followed by a few blessed hours of boating bliss aboard a beautiful new Beneateau powerboat and sailboat in the bay! It was awesome!

Since return to reality, I've already had multiple emails from the participating riders, as well as interested future participants and sponsors. Originally I considered maybe planning a new ride every few years, but it looks like **Boaterz n Bikerz Across America: A Hull of a Tour** may have grown sea legs all its own, with a Deuce coming sooner than expected. Stay tuned!

*Wanda Kenton Smith is a 32-year marine industry marketing executive based in Gulf Breeze, FL. She is president of Kenton Smith Marketing ([www.kentonsmithmarketing.com](http://www.kentonsmithmarketing.com)) and president of Marine Marketers of America. She is also a marketing columnist and former editor of multiple consumer and trade publications in the boating industry.*

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