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## Profiles in Leadership: Glenn Hughes

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By Wanda Kenton Smith

When you talk to American Sportfishing Association president Glenn Hughes about his illustrious 34-year boating industry career and ask what he's enjoyed most, it's all about the boating life and all the great people he's met along the way.



The boating gene is in his DNA. He recalls endless, carefree summer days throughout childhood spent with his four siblings on Fairview Lake in the Pennsylvania Poconos. His youth is chock full of fun memories "from dawn until after dusk" spent skiing, sailing and fishing.

That longstanding love affair with the water continued well into adulthood. His first boat was a 35-foot Chris Craft Catalina that he lived aboard on the Long Island Sound. Another major life milestone occurred 30 years ago when a chance encounter on a friend's boat led him to meet the woman of his dreams and his future wife, Beth.

After college, Glenn worked a few years as an industrial engineer for Boeing Helicopters in Ridley Park, PA. However, he had a fire in his belly for a boating or fishing career, so he laser focused on networking. A second cousin, Chris Donahower, gave him his lucky break, hiring him to sell brokerage advertising for *Power & MotorYacht* magazine. That opportunity lasted a brief four months, but propelled him into an exciting new world that embraced a young man with big dreams.

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Throughout his boating career, Glenn has made an impact. He received recognition as the Florida Magazine Association Publisher of the Year in 2006, along with the MRAA/Jerry Martin Journalism Award in 2012.

Today, he continues to give back to the industry he loves. He serves on the board of directors for the Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation (RBFF); is on the executive committees for the Center for Sportfishing Policy (CSP) and the Outdoor Recreation Roundtable (ORR); is vice chair of the Teddy Roosevelt Conservation Partnership (TRCP) and serves on the Sport Fishing Boating Partnership Council.



*Boating Industry (BI):* Besides your first job in the boating industry, what was your career trajectory?

**Glenn Hughes (GH):** Only four months after starting at PMY, publisher Jeff Hammond decided to start *MotorBoat* Magazine and allowed me to run sales as advertising director; talk about being in

over my head! He (eventually) sold the magazines to Cahners Publishing, and when things went south with the luxury tax in 1991, they closed *MotorBoat*, but kept me on as marketing manager for PMY.

During those early years, I'd run into Terry Snow, owner of World Publications (including *WaterSki*, *Wind Surfing* and *Sport Fishing* magazines) at boat and trade shows and he asked if I'd be interested in running *Sport Fishing* Magazine. Never thought I'd move to Florida, but when PMY relocated to New York City, I knew that wasn't for me, so I headed south to take the job as advertising director. The following year, Terry bought *Marlin* Magazine and I was fortunate to run that. A few promotions later and the purchase of *Fly Fishing* in Salt Waters and I became group publisher of three brands.

In 2006, Terry sold the business to Bonnier but stayed on as CEO five more years and made investments into brands in New York. In 2007, Bonnier bought the Time4 Media group, which included *Yachting*, *MotorBoating & Sailing* and *Saltwater Sportsman*. After

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Sportfishing TV, had many fishing tournaments from Bermuda to Los Cabos with several FishStock events in between. It was a dream!

Then 2008 hit and the next three years were a nightmare.

By 2012, I was asked to leave and decided to take my talents from one rat race to another ... the fishing politics of Washington D.C.

Mike Nussman, then president of the American Sportfishing Association, asked me to come north and replace him when he retired in four years. Those first four years I was able to learn from him as vice president while overseeing membership and the trade show, ICAST.

Now, eight years later I've been blessed to be president for the last four years running an amazing organization that does extraordinary work representing the sportfishing industry.

BI: What are your responsibilities at the ASA?

**GH:** I lead a terrific team including government affairs, membership, trade show, as well as an advocacy arm, Keep America Fishing, and a 501C3 called FishAmerica Foundation. Our mission is to look out for the best interests of the sportfishing industry and the entire recreational fishing community.

My job is to help our members be successful. We do that by supporting our five pillars – we want clean water, abundant fisheries, access to those fish, support trade and commerce and help increase participation in fishing. I spend much of my time listening to our members and board of directors, understanding their needs and concerns, and working with them and our team and partners to lead them to solutions. Much of what we do is in Washington D.C. on the Hill or with the administration, working on laws or ensuring bad laws don't pass.

BI: What have been your major accomplishments since coming aboard in this capacity?

**GH:** Four months into Covid-19, we pulled off a virtual trade show for ICAST because we couldn't meet in person. In 90 days, we undid a trade show that was nine months in the making, working with 540 exhibitors to move them into the virtual platform or into 2021, or give their money back. And then, we developed a rich, engaging and productive virtual show with 200 companies, 400 new products, 120 videos of live and prerecorded events. It was quite a feat and took a total team effort to pull it off.

Besides that, we've reorganized our government affairs team to better serve our members across the country.

BI: What's the best professional advice you've ever received about the boating business – and who gave it?

**GH:** "You gotta get out there and sell! Go belly to belly with these guys!" Jeff Hammond, 1988, at PMY.

"You're gonna run this business someday." Todd Bucher in 1989.

They both kicked me in the tail and had me believing that I could do it.

BI: As you consider your career, who have been your key marine industry mentors – and what impact did they make?

**GH:** Terry Snow (World Publications/Bonnier) was incredibly kind and humble, while also bold. He was always a student of learning and instilled that in us. He put a lot of trust in me and gave me so many opportunities while working for him.

Mike Nussman (ASA) gave me an opportunity to learn under him for four years before turning over the president's job. He helped prepare me for everything, except the

very responsive and willing to help me whenever I asked.

There are so many more going back to the late 80's including pillars in our community like Paul Perry, Earl Bentz and Kris Carroll who gave me time and respect when I hadn't earned either.

BI: What are key lessons you've learned during your marine industry career?

**GH:** Never stop learning. Don't take anyone or anything for granted. To whom much is given, much is expected. Best leaders are the best servers. We've all been given so much; it's our responsibility to give back and help the next generation find their place in this awesome business.

BI: Speaking of the next generation, what advice would you offer newcomers interested in the marine industry?

**GH:** Just do it! Be a sponge, start somewhere, ask questions, have a good attitude, be willing to do whatever it takes. The industry will always be looking for those that want in and there is no shortage of opportunity. Learn from those that have gone before you. These leaders will offer you help; all you have to do is ask.

BI: To close, any life mantras you'd like to share?

**GH:** "This is the day the Lord has made. We shall rejoice and be glad in it." – Psalm 118:24



"Hard to let go of the 'from' if you don't know what the 'to' looks like." – Sally Jewel

"Not about the box or outside the box but what is beyond the box." – Simon Sinek

Churchill Quotes:

"We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give."

"If you are going through hell, keep going." "Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day. Teach him how to fish and you feed him for a lifetime." – Lao Tzu

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