

ON THE WATER

Grady White means freedom to enjoy variety of activities on the water

BY GLENN MILLER
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Scott Latham loves the freedom of Southwest Florida waters that has opened up to him with Grady White boats.

Last fall the Naples resident purchased his second Grady White, a Freedom 307. Many things appealed to him about a Grady White. He knew from reputation and experience that a Grady White is the epitome of boating excellence.

He didn't at first, though, realize the significance of the boat's name: Freedom.

"I never thought of it," Mr. Latham said. "You get to do what you want to do on the water."

Their first Grady White allowed Mr. Latham and his wife, Kathy, to learn more about the water, the ports-of-call, the culture, history, sunsets and people of this corner of Florida.

"We love spending time on the water and try to get out weekly, either to grab lunch on Marco or Fort Myers, spend a little time on Keewaydin Island or run out 30 miles in the gulf to try our luck at fishing," Mr. Latham, a retired GE plant manager from Louisville, Ky., wrote in an email to Florida Weekly. "We are also members of the Naples Cruise Club and Naples Grady White Owners, which keeps us busy."

The couple's first overnight boating trip was to Useppa Island, and their most recent trip was to Marathon in the Keys. The size and design of the Freedom 307 allows them to do whatever activity they prefer: beach, travel or fish.



COURTESY PHOTO

Naples residents Scott and Kathy Latham aboard their Grady White Freedom 307.

The Grady White story goes back nearly 60 years, to 1959 when the company was formed. The plant is in Greenville, N.C.

"My first Grady, I waited almost a year before the model I wanted became available on the used market," Mr. Latham wrote in his email. "It was a 27-foot dual console. I loved it," he added, but as happens with most boaters, bigger and newer models caught his eye.

The Freedom 307 is 30 feet long. Mr.

Latham watched the used market for one for six months before deciding to purchase a brand new 2018 model in May 2017.

Here's how the Grady White website describes the model: "... creating a new category of big, saltwater tough coastal cruiser/family fishing boats. The Freedom 307 is a roomy, versatile, great performing inshore or offshore cruiser with amenities and comfort to spare. Seating is second to none."

Sounds ideal for the Lathams and their friends and family, which includes two grown children and three grandchildren.

Mr. Latham had the opportunity to visit the Grady White plant as his second boat was being built. "I was extremely impressed, which is a bit surprising since my career centered on manufacturing plants," he wrote. "It was very obvious the investment the company makes in developing its employees, both on a personal and professional level, as well as the commitment of the Grady White workforce to build the highest quality boat."

A Grady White, Mr. Latham knows, is not just a boat.

"It feels good when asked by other boaters, 'What boat do you own?' and you can say 'a Grady.'"

The appeal and reputation are so strong that Grady White clubs have formed in 14 states, from Connecticut to Washington to Texas and Florida. There are at least eight such clubs in the Sunshine State, including one in each coastal Southwest Florida county: Naples in Collier County, Fort Myers in Lee County and Port Charlotte in Charlotte County.

One of Mr. Latham's favorite outings aboard his Freedom 307 is for sunset on the Gulf of Mexico. He believes sunsets on the open water and away from land are even more spectacular than those viewed from a beach.

Now that's freedom: out on the water in a dual-console Grady White Freedom 307, watching the sun disappear below the horizon while surrounded by family. ■

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