



## GRADY-WHITE 204-C HATTERAS OVERNIGHTER

ILLUSTRATION BY JIM EWING

**I**t was January 1974 at the Chicago Boat and Sports Show. Eddie Smith (the president) and Wiley Corbett (the general manager) of Grady-White Boats were walking the aisles, looking at the displays. The veteran builders were struck by a boat they saw, a cuddy trihull powerboat with an unusual design feature: The side decks and foredeck were recessed, forming a single-level deck that wrapped around the cabin behind a thigh-high bulwark. They'd never seen anything like it.

On the trip back to their Greenville, North Carolina, plant, the two talked over the idea. "That's what we need to build," said Corbett.

"What's that?" asked Smith.

"That walkaround," Corbett replied.

Grady-White was already known for its fishing and sport runabouts, including the 17-1/2 Hatteras, the 191 Sportsman and the 212 Chesapeake, along with midsize cabin boats such as the 27-foot Catalina. But the company was an innovator, open to new ideas — after all, it had made a successful switch from wood to fiberglass construction. The walkaround was an intriguing concept.

Taking an existing hull, Grady-White created a design with a single-level deck that surrounded a cuddy cabin and helm station, giving safe and open access all around the boat. The 204-C Hatteras

Overnighter was introduced for the 1975 model year. Smith once related that a couple at a boat show looked the walkaround over and casually dismissed it. Two hours later, they came back and bought one. "They got it," said Smith. "They understood."

So did a lot of other people. The 204-C Hatteras Overnighter became "our bread-and-butter boat," says Corbett in the official Grady-White history. "It was a top seller. Sold twice as many as any other model."

Walkaround boats remain a steady seller for Grady-White and many other builders.

— Steve Knauth