

BUSINESS

Eldean Shipyard looks back on a half-century serving the Holland community

Austin Metz The Holland Sentinel

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HOLLAND — This summer, a local family-owned business will celebrate 50 years serving the Holland community.

Eldean Shipyard, a 326-slip marina and resort located at 2223 South Shore Drive on Lake Macatawa, was first purchased by Herb and Roger Eldean in 1973. The marina's history dates back over 100 years, with the start of Jesiek Brothers Shipyard in Holland Harbor.

At the time, Macatawa was a resort town and a transfer station for passenger steamships and trains. The brothers started as boat builders. During World War II, the marina helped build 70-foot submarine chasers for the U.S.

“Boating is in our blood, so being out here on the water ... it's been outstanding,” said Wade Eldean, who runs the marina with his wife, Kris, following the passing of his father in 2022. “I always tell people that, if I have to work, I wouldn't want to work anywhere else. I want to be on the water.”

Eldean said, while it's still early in the season, the company plans to start putting boats in the water this week. While it's weather dependent, a mild winter in Holland means getting boats on the water faster.

Eldean Shipyard largely operates in the summer, but Eldean said the business is actually quite busy in the winter — as it employs a dozen technicians working year-round to service the boats.

“The winter is actually kind of our busy season because we store a lot of the boats in our buildings and, while they're in the buildings, we're able to get a lot of work done,” Eldean said.

Eldean credits his father, Herb, for making the shipyard a year-round business. He said, back in the 1980s, his father made the decision to convert the wooden, cold storage barns into temperature-controlled steel buildings.

“In the winter time, instead of nothing happening on the boats and having to lay off employees, it's become a year-round work environment,” Eldean said.

Over the years, the marina has grown. It now includes a children's playground, three picnic areas with gas grills, two self-service laundries, a clubhouse, a swimming pool and two jacuzzis, and seven additional vacation rentals.

"I think this has all been possible because of him (Herb) and I growing up in the boat business and having that background both working and just enjoying boats," Eldean said. "We make sure to place an emphasis on the little details and designs to match the Holland area."

Eldean plans to kick off the half-century celebration with a start-of-the-season party around Memorial Day. The family tries to hold events each year on Memorial Day, Fourth of July, and Labor Day, but this year is special, with food from Hog Wild BBQ and the Black River Band playing live music.

The event is for employees and members of the community who use the marina.

"We want to thank everybody for continuing to come (to the marina)," Eldean said. "Our clients have been great over the years and the boaters are always fun to talk to and learn about. ... Thanks for the many years of patronage and for choosing us."

— *Contact freelancer Austin Metz at atametz@gannett.com.*

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