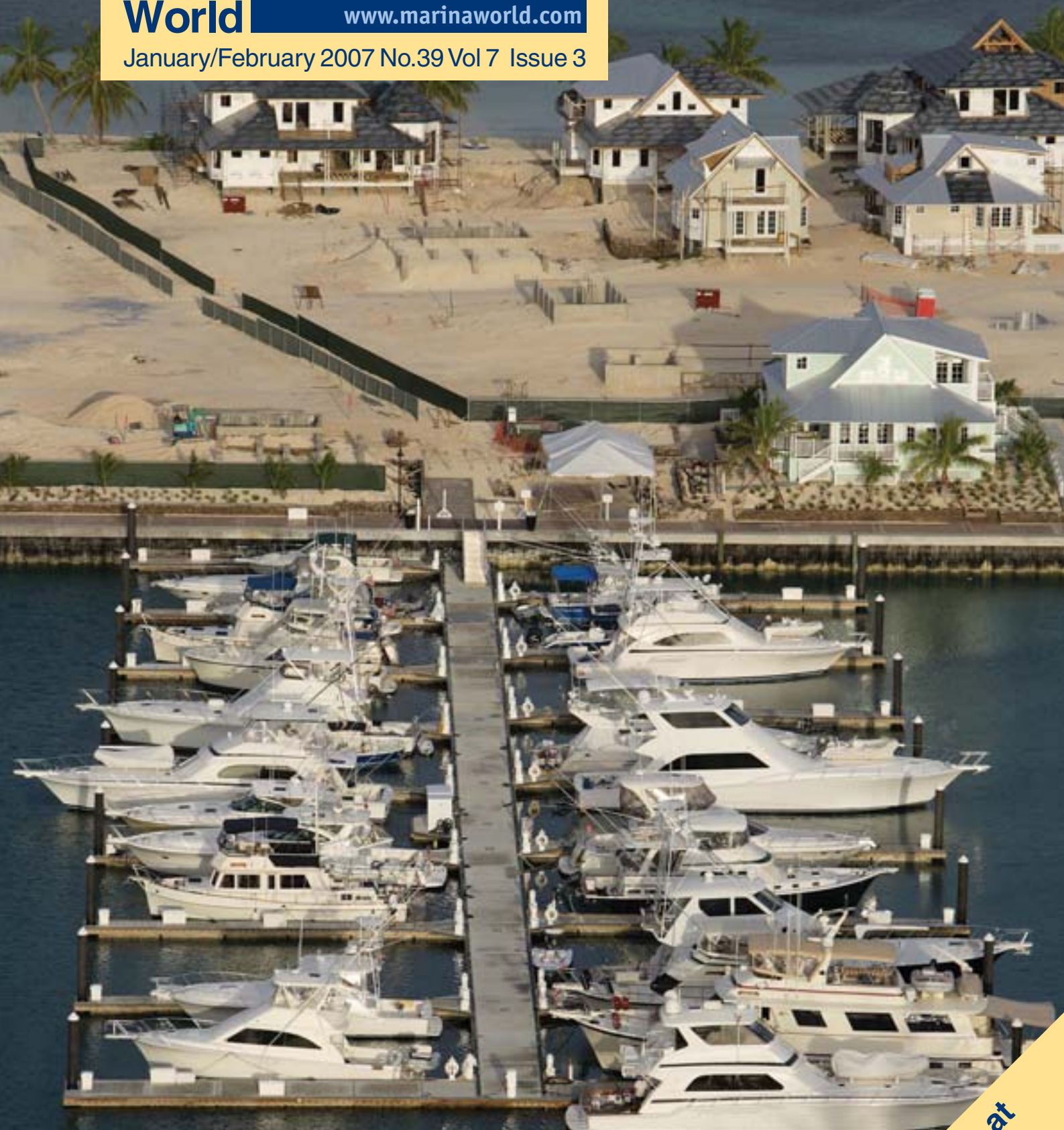


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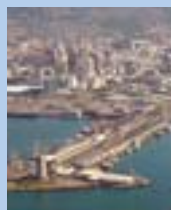
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Front cover: Chub Cay in the southernmost cay of the Berry Chain in the Bahamas has long been a tranquil retreat for the wealthy. A revamp retains all of its exclusivity but adds a modern touch. Photo: Forest Johnson Photography, Inc.



Wade Eldean CMM (above) helps run Eldean Shipyard (left) on Lake Macatawa.

Family run and family-friendly

The owners of Eldean Shipyard, one of the oldest active shipyard-marina complexes in the United States, are on a self-confessed mission to offer first class services and facilities to ensure their customers enjoy boating to the full. Wade Eldean, partner and vice president, newly qualified Certified Marina Manager (CMM) and key player in realising the company's vision, talks shop.

Now located five miles west of Holland on the south shore of Lake Macatawa, where it joins Lake Michigan, Eldean Shipyard started life as Jesiek Brothers Shipyard back in 1901. At this time, it operated in Grand Rapids on the Grand River moving to its existing site in Macatawa, Michigan in 1910. Always in private hands, it has been owned and operated for 33 years by the Eldean family – brothers Herb and Roger and their respective sons Wade and Matt. Herb and Roger Eldean were also born into the business as their father, Herb Sr., was Federal Harbormaster at Monroe Street Harbor, Chicago, and owner and operator of the mooring and tender service, Eldean Yacht Service, within the harbour. Today, Monroe Street Harbor is the world's largest municipal marina.

When the Eldeans took over their present

Right: One of two Marine Travelift hoists that help give Eldean a competitive edge for boat slipping and storage. Below: Grounds are landscaped by the yard's own gardeners.



business in 1973, the facility (which had principally been operated as a custom boat builder) had 150 slips and 100,000 square feet of unheated covered storage. A 20-year renovation process began. Wade Eldean did some research for *Marina World* to find out how hard it was to get things started. "The state permitting process was a challenge but the Corps of Engineers were easier to work with. The rebuilding had to be categorised as 'ongoing' rather than 'phased'," he explained.

"We made the improvements as money was available, either cash, borrowing or capital additions."

"During the reconstruction of the facility, the most important ingredient was being 'hands on'. If you were not there to make a decision on a daily basis, you couldn't be assured it would go your way." There were other practical hurdles. "When tearing down the old storage buildings and replacing them, we had a short window to complete the job as the last boats would be out of a building in June and the first boats back in would arrive in October."

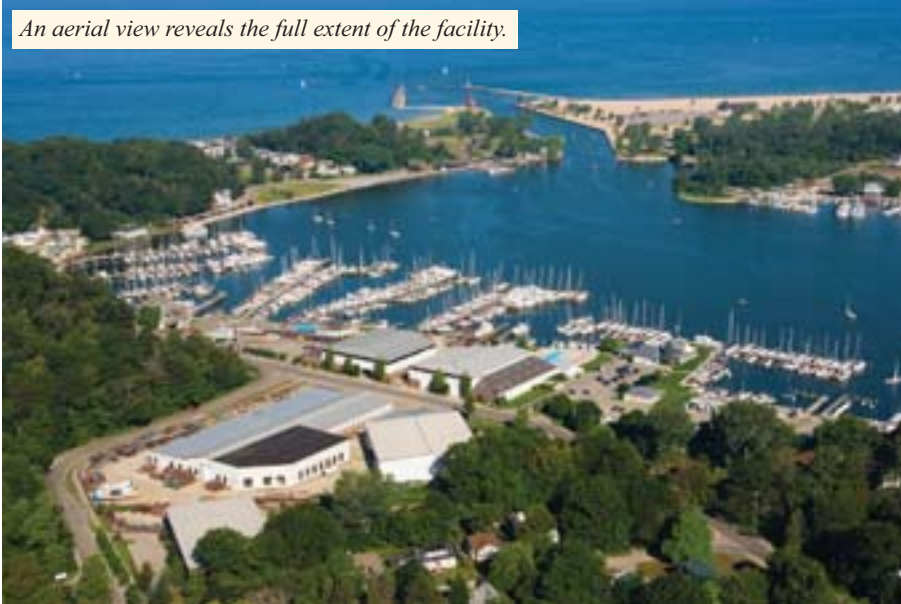
Challenges were met and, today, Eldean Shipyard offers 310 slips, ten moorings and an impressive boatyard facility. Of the handful of marinas on the shores of Lake Macatawa, including two of comparable size to Eldean, the latter offers the best overall amenities – and improvements are ongoing. "We recently completed a 50-slip expansion and now have slips available for rent," Eldean confirms. "We also keep up to 40 transient berths available in a variety of sizes, charging \$1.50 per foot per night with a minimum of \$37."

Docks are fixed and constructed from wooden piles and dock boards with steel I-frame supports. All slips have Marina Power & Lighting service pedestals in 30 to 50 amp configurations. The marina is somewhat dominated by sailboats (65%) and the average boat size is 35 feet.

In addition to the wet marina, which is now at its maximum feasible size, Eldean Shipyard



An aerial view reveals the full extent of the facility.



has four acres of outside storage space and 150,000 sq ft of heated indoor storage that is 98% full.

“Depending on demand, the boatyard could be expanded or reconfigured for drystack, spray booth or with an additional storage building,” Eldean notes. “We are currently speaking with a few dealers about expanding boat sales operations at our facility.” Outside and inside storage areas together provide winter storage for over 350 boats.

The yard slips, stores and services boats from 10 to 150 feet in length and relies on a variety of yard equipment for the purpose. Dominating the line-up are two Marine Travelift hoists of 35 and 70 ton lift capacity. Two scissor lifts, a hydraulic trailer, various forklifts, tractors and a front-end loader complete the portfolio. According to Eldean, all equipment was selected by “manufacturer’s reputation, referrals, usability and price.”

Family focus

With a background richly influenced by all things nautical, it comes as no surprise to discover that the Eldeans are keen participants in boating and watersports and eagerly promote boating as a family pastime. Eldean Shipyard is family-friendly with a fantastic children’s playground, three picnic areas with gas grills, a swimming pool, two hot tubs, marina clubhouse, self-service laundry facilities, a dog walking route and access to sandy beaches.

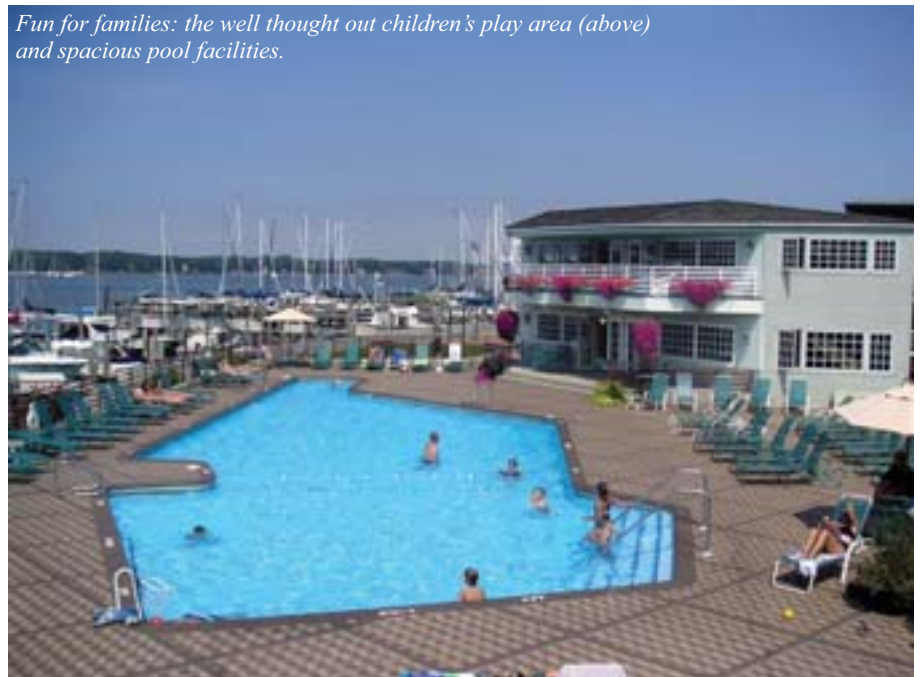
In 1976 the owners built a new 10,000 sq ft ship’s store, boat sales and general office building, which also houses the marina shower and toilet facilities. A second marina bath house was added in 2005. The store carries a complete inventory of electronic equipment, marine hardware and supplies, nautical clothing and more. Gas and diesel fuel, block and cubed ice are available at the fuel dock. A post office is located on the premises and wireless Internet access provided by Air2Access is offered on a subscription basis. All marina grounds are professionally landscaped and impeccably maintained by the shipyard’s own landscaping crew.

While a grocery store and liquor store are to be found nearby, award-winning cuisine and beer and wine take-out can be enjoyed on the spot. Wade’s parents, Patricia and Herb,

opened the Sandpiper Restaurant in 1985, amassed an impressive number of regional ‘best restaurant’ awards and, in 1997, opted for a revamp. The restaurant was enlarged, a wood-burning oven added and the concept changed from white tablecloth, fine dining to upscale casual. Renamed Piper, the new style facility has also won an award for excellence.



Fun for families: the well thought out children’s play area (above) and spacious pool facilities.



Green credentials

Recently certified as a Michigan Clean Marina, environmental stewardship is taken very seriously. Key highlights of services and systems in place include:

- contracts with customers, employees and subcontractors to follow a set of best management practices that focus on clean and green operations. Signs outlining these practices are positioned in every building
- employees undertake training to increase knowledge of safe and environmental practices
- hazardous spill prevention and emergency response systems
- recycling programmes for waste oil, anti-freeze, batteries, fuel, oil filters and more
- use of environmentally safe substitute products when available
- pump-out service
- communications to boaters to make them more environmentally aware e.g. site tours, presentations, signage, bulletin board postings and newsletters by mail and email.

For the future

Although security is not a major concern in the area, attracting and keeping good employees is a major challenge. “It’s also currently difficult to attract more customers in the challenging Michigan economy,”

Wade Eldean admits. High property taxes are also a concern as is the ongoing pressure to keep the water safe and clean for future generations of boaters.

Wade, who is also an accomplished artist selling and exhibiting his artwork throughout the USA, anxiously awaits the warm sunny summer months in Michigan, not only for the energy of customers at the marina but also for his family’s own enjoyment on the water. His wife Kris and son Ryan enjoy cruising, wakeboarding and exploring the local Michigan waters. He can also be seen hooking a 20lb king salmon at sunrise and racing S2 7.9s in the evenings.