



PROFILES IN LEADERSHIP:

Bill Yeargin

President & CEO, Correct Craft

From his earliest days as a CPA for Rybovich to his appointment as president and CEO of Correct Craft in 2006, Bill Yeargin has invested 40 years in the marine industry as a top corporate leader, culture evangelist, influencer and agent of change. In his current position, he oversees 48 companies including boat and engine manufacturers with distribution in 70 countries along with water sports parks and vertical integration operations.

His work also embodies service on numerous boards including his present role as board chair of the National Marine Manufacturers Association. He has represented the industry on many state and national issues, having served on both the Obama and Trump administrations in cabinet-level advisory councils. He is also a popular speaker at marine events across the globe and has published scores of articles and columns in leading B2B publications.

With his unrelenting drive and passion for his work have come well deserved distinctions.

Boating Industry has named him its “Mover and Shaker of the Year;” *Florida Trend Magazine* tapped him as one of “Florida’s Most Influential Business Leaders;” and the *Orlando Business Journal* named him “CEO of the Year.” Other recognitions include the distinguished “Governor’s Business Ambassador Medal” and the Palm Beach State College “Emerald Torch Award” presented to outstanding alumni. On the corporate front, Correct Craft has been named Florida’s “Manufacturer of the Year” and the industry’s “Most Innovative Company.” Many of the Correct Craft brands and subsidiaries have also earned key product distinctions for design, innovation and performance.

Earlier this year, Correct Craft officially announced that Yeargin would step down from his role as CEO effective April 1, 2026, and transition to board chair.

As he begins to wind down this final chapter, *Boating Industry* spoke candidly with Yeargin about a variety of topics, from his personal zest for the boating lifestyle, to leadership lessons he’s learned along the way, to what he sees on the horizon ahead – both for himself and the industry at large.

Boating Industry (BI): Before we dive into the business discussion, what’s your boating background?

Bill Yeargin (BY): I was introduced to boating as a teen by a friend who had a boat. It wasn’t much, but we had a blast. Once I had kids, I wanted to share the boating lifestyle, so I bought my first boat around 2000, an 18-foot Sea Ray. Today, I have a Nautique G23.

BI: Any favorite boating memories?

BY: Definitely the time spent with my kids when they were growing up; we were on the lake every weekend. We all still enjoy cruising, wake surfing, wakeboarding and tubing as a family. I especially enjoy boating with my three-year-old granddaughter, Rosie, who likes to ride and sit on Pap’s lap!

BI: Do you regularly visit the water sports park in Orlando, too?

BY: Yes. It’s fun and allows me to go out on a Saturday morning and get some great exercise. I’ve ridden the cable for up to 90 minutes straight!

BI: Let’s shift gears and talk business.

Tell us about plans for the upcoming transition.

BY: I told the Correct Craft board, of which I am a member, that when I stepped down, I would give them over a year’s notice and would have a qualified internal candi-

date ready for the job. I kept both of those commitments. After considering our internal candidates, the board selected Zach Hutcheson, who will do a great job.

BI: What will be your new responsibilities as board chair?

BY: I'll manage the board while also helping Zach and the Correct Craft team as much as possible. I'll help however needed, while also giving Zach the space to do the job; I won't be in his way.

BI: How will you manage your time with this new role and other industry commitments?

BY: I have a lot of requests for my time, but I'm choosing carefully and not yet committed to anything. I could easily fill my schedule, but if I'd wanted that, I wouldn't have stepped down as CEO.

BI: As you consider your lengthy career, what's been your most rewarding professional achievement at Correct Craft?

BY: Being able to develop a culture that encourages learning and service. I've seen this culture make a positive impact on innumerable people, both inside and outside of our organization. Making Life Better for these folks makes me very happy.

BI: "Making Life Better" is your official cultural directive, right?

BY: When we started to make acquisitions about 13 years ago, I read the book "Start with Why" by Simon Sinek. It inspired me to choose "Making Life Better" as our "Why" and since then, rarely a day goes by that it is not discussed. We want everyone we encounter to be better off because of our interaction... including our competitors through some of the industry initiatives we've led, like the Culture Summits or Innovation Summit.

BI: Let's talk leadership. What's the most valuable lesson you've learned about leadership during your tenure?

BY: To be a learner and focus on impact, not reward.

BI: How do you lead and inspire your key management team?

BY: By creating tremendous clarity around our values, where we are going, and how we will use our platform for good. By creating a vision that inspires folks to do great things.

BI: What leadership traits do you feel are most needed by those working in the marine industry today?

BY: Leaders need a vision for the future and must have the ability to execute on that vision.

A fun Saturday spin at the Orlando Water Sports Park is part of Yeargin's active lifestyle.



BI: Have any marine industry leaders mentored and influenced you?

BY: My primary mentor was the owner of Rybovich, Ed Bronstien. He demonstrated how to lead with integrity while caring deeply about those on your team.

BI: What's been the greatest challenge(s) of your boating industry career and what did you learn in the process?

BY: My biggest challenges have always been around making people changes. However, I understand the importance of protecting the company by requiring underperformers to leave. My biggest mistake has involved hiring highly competent people without paying enough attention to their character and chemistry. When I make that mistake, it does not end well. I would never hire anyone I knew who had character or chemistry issues, but getting hijacked by competency can result in not paying enough attention to those areas.

The solution is awareness of the challenge and assuring enough attention is paid to character and chemistry, especially when you believe the applicant can fix your problem.

BI: What has been your strategy for handling conflict resolution among team members?

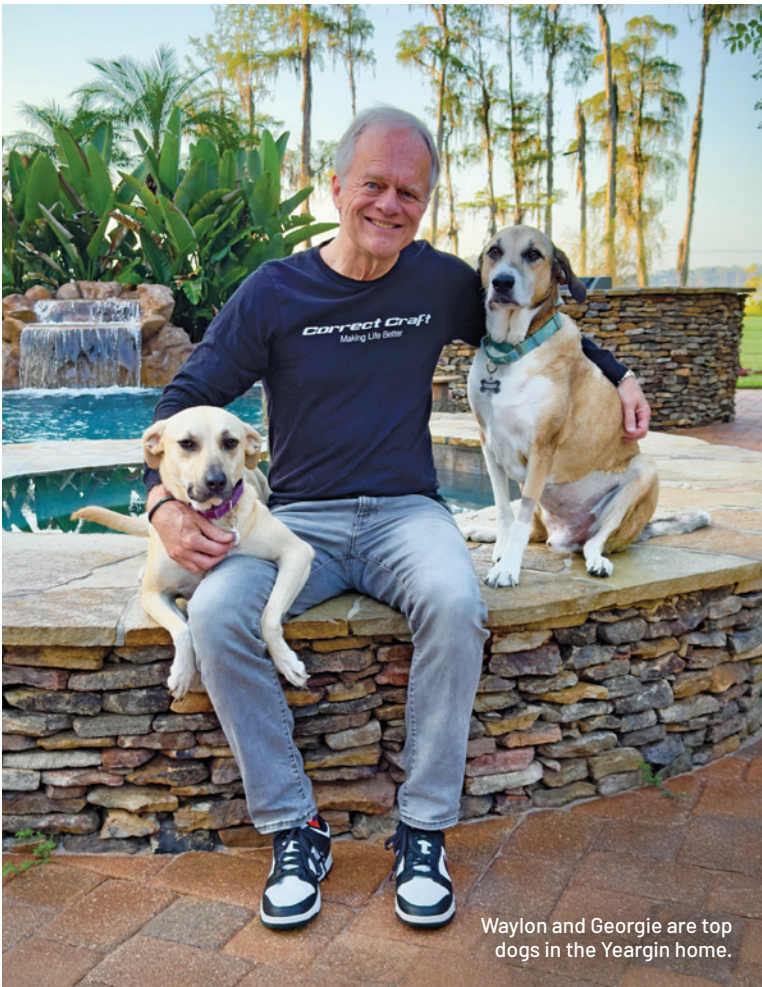
BY: I encourage conflict because it makes us better. However, it must be based on a foundation of trust and a commitment from everyone to support the decision when made. It's based on ideas from Patrick Lencioni's book "5 Dysfunctions of a Team."

BI: What drives and motivates you?

BY: Having an impact, making everything around me better and helping people, and being able to inspire folks to learn and serve. I've tried to use both my personal and professional platforms to do that.



Yeargin's granddaughter, Rosie, brings a smile and extra joy to his life!



Waylon and Georgie are top dogs in the Yeargin home.

BI: With your heavy workload and travel schedule, what's your trick to maintaining a healthy life balance?

BY: I'm blessed to have a tremendous amount of energy which helps a lot. I'm a relatively quick decision-maker, so I don't spend much time swirling regarding a decision. I've been told that I don't have a rear-view mirror and don't spend much time looking back. And finally, and probably most important, I try not to spend time worrying about things I can't control.

I also try to exercise every day – I walk or jog, lift weights in the gym or go to yoga or Pilates. I try to mix it up. I ran a marathon a couple years ago – preparing for that and running it was a bucket list experience.

BI: What do you believe are the biggest challenges today facing the recreational marine industry – both short and long-term?

BY: Short term – declining market, affordability. Long term – workforce, declining market, affordability, aging buyers.

BI: How important is it for marine industry leaders to become educated and engaged in state and national legislative issues and where should they start?

BY: It's very important. They should start by attending the American Boating Congress in May.

BI: You've served an extended term as NMMA Chairman for more than 2.5 years. From your experience and perspective, is the industry in good hands?

BY: I believe we have an excellent board looking out for our industry. Frank Hugelmeyer and his team are outstanding. We will continue to have challenges, but we have great folks leading us.

BI: Finally, let's talk about what's ahead for you outside of the workplace. Any plans for personal pursuits?

BY: I've been all over the world, so I'm not going to say the typical answer which is travel. I'd like to help both my church and the little community in which I live. I'm also really excited about a new series of children's books based on Pixie the Polar Bear, a fictional character I created for my granddaughter Rosie. Pixie has some amazing adventures!

BI: Speaking of books, you've written and published six leadership books, including two bestsellers. What's your favorite? And besides the new children's series, anything else on tap?

BY: I'd probably say "Faith Leap," which explains why I'm a Christian. I'm working on another book on mindset, with the working title "The CEO Secret."

BI: Other than your own, what top three business books do you recommend?

BY: I love learning and read a wide range of content. Between my Kindle and Audible apps, I read 75-100 books a year. Audible is a huge help because I can listen while driving, exercising or walking through an airport.

Wow – limiting recommendations to three is really hard. I'd say, "7 Habits of Highly Effective People," "5 Dysfunctions of a Team," and "Who Not How." But I could recommend a lot more!



"Making Life Better" is the "Why" for Correct Craft and that includes engagement in scores of community service initiatives. Photo features volunteers from the Sea Ark plant including Yeargin, who participated in a community service project in Monticello, Alaska.

BI: How can we access your full list of favorites?

BY: Every three months I post my favorite reads for the last quarter on social media, and normally post an annual list at year-end.

BI: You mentioned that travel isn't on your bucket list, perhaps not surprising considering you've traveled the globe extensively, including 110 countries. Outside of the United States, what are your favorite destinations?

BY: The more different a place is, the more I like it. I've really enjoyed traveling through the Middle East, Asia and Africa. Probably my most fun traveling experience was wakeboarding on the Sea of Galilee!

BI: What don't we know about you that might be a surprise or interesting?

BY: I'm crazy about my rescues, Georgie and Waylon, maybe to a fault. If I get up in the middle of the night and one of my dogs has taken my spot in bed, I'll sleep in the recliner to avoid disturbing them.

BI: You've got the final word: give me one to describe yourself.

BY: I hope it would be "impactful." •



Wanda Kenton Smith is a former magazine and newspaper editor and marine industry journalist/columnist of more than 25 years. She is also an award-winning marketer, advertiser, publicist and an industry speaker. Visit www.kentonsmithmarketing.com.

Boating Industry
INTELLIGENCE YOU CAN PROFIT FROM

START YOUR SUBSCRIPTION
now!

WWW.BOATINGINDUSTRY.COM/SUBSCRIBE