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Connor Bordelon

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Connor Bordelon: Stylish newcomer from purpose-built shipyard

Story and photos by Brian Gauvin

Above, Bordelon Marine's new Stingray 260 on sea trials in the Gulf of Mexico in September. Right, the soaring superstructure spanning the full width of the deck and the "chine wave" sweep to the bow distinguish the class from a typical OSV of the same length.

Plenty of workboat operators dream of building their own boats. Wes Bordelon has done it — and he started his own shipyard to make it happen.

Bordelon Marine, founded by Wes's father, Terry, in 1980, now has the first of a distinctive series of three 257-foot multipurpose supply vessels (MPSVs) from a yard in Houma, La., that was created specifically to build them. *Connor Bordelon*, named for Wes's son, is the first Stingray 260 class DP-2 vessel to join the company's existing fleet of 11 OSVs.

The Stingray 260s are the tangible result of a company rebuild-

ing program almost 15 years in the making. In 1999, when Wes Bordelon returned home to New Orleans from a career in the music business — an industry he didn't expect to leave — the company's fleet consisted of three 110-foot utility OSVs. By the end of the next year, he had decided he wanted to rebuild the company.

"I grew up in and around the industry working on boats in the summer and growing up in shipyards," said Bordelon. "I understand the industry and the cycles because we lived them. By 2000 ... I wanted to be home and stay home because I had rekindled my



interest in the business.”

That year Bordelon Marine, which is based in Lockport, La., ordered three 150-foot DP-1 mini supply vessels from a hometown yard, Bollinger Shipyards. For the next few years, Bordelon concentrated on developing a solid company infrastructure and client base. “But we were still a tiny mom-and-pop company compared to what was out there,” he said.



Wes Bordelon (above) at the shipyard in Houma, La., that was created to build the Stingray 260s: “You spend so much time designing the fundamentals of a boat, why not put a little extra into it?” Left, a detail from the engine room. Each of the two propulsion chains is a 2,200-hp Cummins QSK-60 Tier 3 diesel shafted to a Schottel 1215 z-drive.

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The 185-foot by 44-foot cargo deck is unusually long for the length of boat and is protected by a five-foot cargo rail. Because the Stingray 260s are designed for ROV and subsea intervention projects with a substantial number of clients on board, there are accommodations in the house for 52 crew and passengers. A spiral staircase winds from the A deck to the bridge.

In 2005, Bordelon Marine contracted with Bollinger to build two 170-foot DP-1 supply vessels. By 2007, after some acquisitions, its fleet consisted of 12 boats.

"From 2007 to 2010 I wanted us to take the company to the next level," said Bordelon. The initial emphasis was on internal growth; Bordelon built new offices in Lockport. By 2010, the company had initiated design work on the Stingray class; it forged ahead and built the shipyard the following year, calling it Bordelon Marine Shipbuilders. *Connor Bordelon* joined the fleet this September.

"It really started out with a love of boats and wanting to build them," said Bordelon. "You want your boat to incorporate all of your good ideas gathered over the years. Creating my own design is a personal passion. I love boats and building a boat brings together such a collection of talent and disciplines. The process fascinates me."

And there are practical advantages to creating your own yard to build your own boats. For one thing, as Bordelon points out, you can adjust to changes in the market as you go, or tweak things without creating a mountain of expensive change orders at a commercial shipyard. And you can guarantee the quality of the construction.

"You can build the boat when you want to build it, at a pace you want to



complete it at, so that you can control the cost," said Bordelon. "We're not having to change the way we do things to remain profitable the way a shipyard might have to, to stay in business. We simply build to the highest quality we can accomplish."

Another benefit? "You can also keep all of your good ideas to yourself."

What distinguishes *Connor Bordelon* from a typical OSV of the same length is a thinner bow and a high superstructure that spans the full breadth of the boat. The design and location of the house



allow an increase in accommodation space and cargo deck area. The thinner bow increases fuel economy and speed.

The bow and superstructure configuration is visually striking, with a curved chine, coined "chine wave" for its appearance, and the soaring superstructure is located farther forward than on most OSVs of similar length. "You spend so much time designing the fundamentals of a boat, why not put a little extra into it?" Bordelon said.

"Everything matters in a boat," said Bordelon. "The entire bow is a system, and the chine curve affects how other parts of the bow are shaped. We liked having a thinner bow to cut through waves. The chine wave can do that and we can thin up the hull and recoup the space for accommodation in the higher superstructure."

The vessel's accommodations are for 52 crew and passengers configured in four-bunk, two-bunk and single-bed staterooms. A space-saving but spacious spiral staircase winds up through the

superstructure from the A deck to the E deck, the bridge. There is a 25-person lounge, a conference room and a remotely operated vehicle (ROV) control center with one off-line and one on-line office. Above the pilothouse are two Stang monitors from FFS, one to port and one to starboard of the mast.

The stateroom treatments, comfort and appointment are exceptional and conform to Bordelon's belief that a well-

rested crew works more safely and more productively than a tired crew. All of the rooms contain a head, television, Internet and phone connections, and feature individual climate controls. In addition, the client staterooms have CCTV connections and access to the alarm and monitoring systems.

"We understand the importance of the human interaction with equipment and we benefit from the attention

and respect a mariner pays to it," said Bordelon. "It benefits the company as a whole, but there are also personal and cultural reasons for me to do this. The guys spend a lot of time offshore and they are really important to our business. To scrimp on their living environment is not good for business and does not align with my personal idea of a company culture."

The bridge contains a small office,

CONNOR BORDELON		SPECIFICATIONS
OWNER/ OPERATOR	Bordelon Marine, Lockport, La.	
DIMENSIONS	L: 257' B: 52' D: 18'	
DESIGNER/ BUILDER	Bordelon Marine Shipbuilders, Houma, La.	
MISSION	Multipurpose supply vessel	
CREW SIZE	12 to 14 (mission-dependent)	
HULL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Steel monohull 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> and S-Band radar
PERFORMANCE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maximum speed: 14 knots Cruising speed: 12 knots 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Electronic chart display: Marine Technologies ECDIS 900, based on MARIS ECDIS 900 Sperry NAVIPOL magnetic compass system AIS: JRC JH5-182/183 Enav software
PROPULSION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (2) Cummins QSK-60 Tier 3 diesels (2) Schottel SRP 1215 FP z-drives with reduction gears at 6.442:1 turning fixed-pitch, four-blade propellers 2.4 meters in diameter (2) Schottel STT FP bow thrusters, 1,120 hp each 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Marine Technologies autopilot/track pilot SAILOR 6000-series radar Marine Technologies C-Comm VSAT satellite connection Alarm and monitoring system: RAACI (Robichaux Automation and Control Inc.)
GENERATORS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (2) Cummins QSK-38 generators, 975 kW each Cummins QSK-19 generator, 525 kW Cummins 6CTAR, 170-kW emergency generator 	ADDITIONAL INFORMATION
CAPACITIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cargo deck: 185' by 44', 8,140 sq. ft. total; 2,000 long ton capacity Fuel: 158,000 gallons Water: 23,000 gallons Liquid mud: 10,400 barrels Drill water: 240,000 gallons Dry bulk: 4,000 cu. ft. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hydro-Pro HP 24-2F 24-foot fixed-boom crane, 2,400 lbs. lifting capacity at max. reach FFS firefighting system with (2) Stang electric remote-controlled 6-inch LowPro monitors CounterFire ENM 400-550 pumps Onboard fire suppression systems Total berths: 52 Joinery: Marine Interior Systems MarineFAST Model MX-5M wastewater treatment system
NAVIGATION/ COMMUNICATIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bridge and systems integration: Marine Technologies Radar: Marine Technologies/Sperry X 	CLASSIFICATIONS
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ABS (requested): +A1, Fire Fighting Vessel Class I, Offshore Support Vessel, Circle E, +AMS, +ACCU, +DPS-2, SOLAS USCG: Subchapter L and I

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a head and a survey room surrounded by a low partition that does not block the captain's visibility aft. Marine Technologies used its latest system to fully integrate the fore and aft control stations, dynamic positioning, thruster controls, conning, navigation and SAT communications. Marine Technologies also set up the interface with the automation, monitoring and alarm package, supplied by Robichaux Automation and Control Inc. (RAACI). There are multiple monitoring screens and two aft control stations with a clear view of the

The galley (above); right, a stateroom. Bordelon says the company values its employees: "To scrimp on their living environment ... does not align with my personal idea of a company culture."



cargo deck. "The entire vessel is integrated," said Bordelon.

Below the A deck sit the tank farm and the machinery areas. The bow thruster compartment houses two Schottel 1215, electric, 1,120-hp thrusters. The sturdy horsepower was chosen to help compensate for the vessel's high wind profile.



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The boat's midbody contains 12 800-barrel liquid mud tanks arranged in three independent mud systems. Aft of the tank farm is the engine room, with the mains located outboard and the generators inboard. Each of the two propulsion chains is a 2,200-hp Cummins QSK-60, Tier 3 diesel shafted to a Schottel 1215 z-drive. There are two Cummins QSK-38 generators at 975 kW and one Cummins QSK-19 525-kW backup generator.

As a result of moving the superstruc-

Above, modules for the second Stingray 260 take shape in the company's yard. Right, wiring on the first boat.



ture forward, the 185- by 44-foot cargo deck is exceptionally long for the length of the boat. The deck is lined with five-foot-high outer bulwarks that give the crew good protection from the elements but allow them to see over.

The deck has four filling and discharging stations, two forward and two aft, connected to two 300-hp Mission

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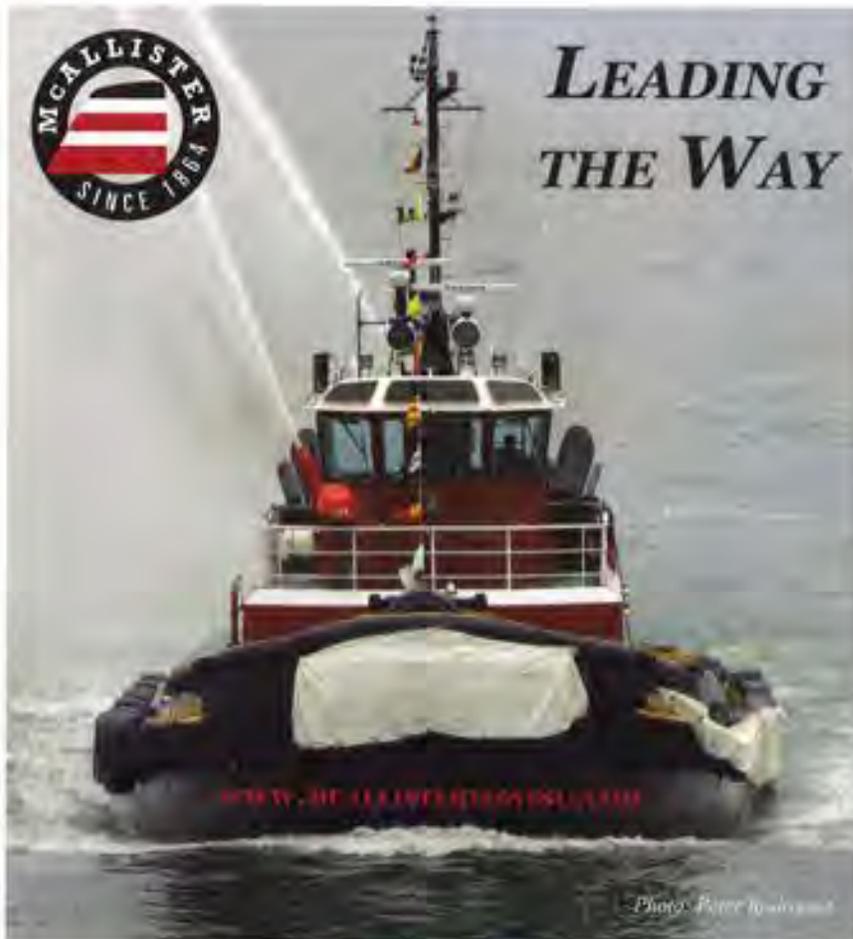


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Mag liquid mud pumps. Space has been carved out behind the house to allow for ROV units. The ROV support equipment is inside the superstructure, where it does not encroach on the cargo deck.

"This boat can handle a full range of traditional oilfield activities, but it was really designed to support ROV and subsea intervention projects with a client on board," said Bordelon. "It has all of the high-spec capabilities of a larger PSV, but all rolled into a much smaller and more affordable package. The Stingray is more like a Swiss Army knife rather than heavy cargo ship."

In the past couple of years, diesel-electric propulsion has found its place in the engine rooms of more and more U.S.-built workboats. Despite the trend, Bordelon decided to power the Stingray class conventionally, but with hybrid characteristics taken from the diesel-electric world.

"Initially it was a natural decision to go all conventional propulsion because that's what our mariners had experience with, and we wanted to stick with what we knew," said Bordelon. "But as the design evolved, it became clear that our clients wanted features that lent themselves better to diesel-electric. So we effectively did a little of both. We liked the quiet and efficient variable-speed (electric) bow thruster drives. And we went with an electrical FiFi drive motor to eliminate the miles of pipe and space-eating power take-off system."

The extra ship's power also provides ROV clients with power on deck and eliminates the need for additional equipment that would be exposed to the elements and use up deck area.

"The vessel has real-time power management systems similar to a diesel-electric, so you only use what power you need at any given time," Bordelon said. However, he added, "having independent diesel motors shafted to z-drives assures that the chances of going 'dark-ship' are remote."

Bordelon says whether or not his company will use its new shipyard to build more Stingray boats or upgraded versions will be decided by the market. But he adds: "We didn't build the yard just to build three boats." •