

Marine Industry Mourns the Passing of J. Robert “Bob” Long

Bob Long led Starcraft, AMF Crestliner, Wellcraft Marine, and Marine Concepts during a career spanning more than five decades

SARASOTA, Fla. — 17 July 2026 — J. Robert “Bob” Long, a marine industry executive and entrepreneur whose leadership helped shape recreational boating, passed away peacefully at his Sarasota home on July 15, 2026. He was 86 years old and was surrounded by his loving family.

Bob grew up in the small town of Potosi, Missouri, and graduated in a class of eight students. He earned a bachelor’s degree in industrial engineering and later a Master of Business Administration from Saint Louis University. His education reflected the combination of technical ability and business insight that would distinguish his career.

After beginning his professional career with McDonnell Douglas, Bob entered the marine industry and went on to lead Starcraft and AMF Crestliner. During his time at Crestliner, he doubled sales within three years and received the company’s President’s Award.

Bob joined Wellcraft Marine in 1976 and served as president for 17 years. During his tenure, annual sales grew approximately tenfold, from \$30 million to \$300 million, and Wellcraft became one of the recreational boating industry’s most prominent manufacturers. The Wellcraft Scarab became a leading name in high-performance boating, achieving success in offshore racing and gaining national recognition when the iconic Scarab 38 KV appeared on the television series *Miami Vice*.

In 1994, Bob and his wife, Karen, purchased Marine Concepts from its founder, Augusto “Kiko” Villalon. At the time, the company had 14 employees. Over the next 22 years, Bob expanded it into a design, engineering, tooling, and composite manufacturing business with approximately 250 employees and more than 300,000 square feet of operations in Cape Coral and Sarasota.

Ironically, the company’s expansion included the purchase of Wellcraft’s former Sarasota manufacturing facility, bringing Bob’s career full circle. At age 75, Bob sold the company in 2016 so he could retire and spend more time with his grandchildren. Marine Concepts is now owned by Patrick Industries and describes itself as the world’s largest provider of composite tooling to the recreational marine industry, with more than 350 employees and seven five-axis mills.

Bob’s contributions extended beyond the companies he led. He helped establish the National Marine Manufacturers Association (NMMA) in 1979, served on its Board of Directors for six years, and frequently traveled to Washington, D.C., to advocate for recreational boating. In recognition of his service, Bob was inducted into the NMMA Hall of Fame, one of the industry’s highest distinctions.

Although Bob appreciated these honors, those who worked with him knew that he measured success by the strength of his teams and the development of the people around him. He encouraged others to take thoughtful risks, learn from setbacks, and keep moving forward. As Bob often said, “If you want to win at anything, you can’t be afraid to fail.”

“Bob believed that the strength of any company came from its people,” said Todd Biddison, Program Manager at Marine Concepts. “He challenged those around him to think bigger, trusted them to do their best work, and took genuine pride in helping others succeed.”

Above all, Bob was a devoted husband, father, grandfather, brother, and friend. He was preceded in death by his beloved wife, Karen, whose love and partnership formed the foundation of their family and the businesses they built together.

Bob and Karen raised six children, and he took great joy in sharing his love of boating with them and with his 12 grandchildren.

Bob’s legacy lives on in the companies he built, the industry he helped advance, and the many people he mentored throughout his career.

Memorial Arrangements

Visitation will be held on **Thursday, July 23, 2026, from 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.**, at **Toale Brothers Funeral Home**, 40 N. Orange Avenue, Sarasota, Florida 34236.

A **Funeral Mass** will be celebrated on **Friday, July 24, 2026, at 9:30 a.m.**, at **Incarnation Catholic Church**, 2901 Bee Ridge Road, Sarasota, Florida 34239.

In lieu of flowers, memorial donations can be made to **Incarnation Catholic Church, Sarasota and Mote Marine Laboratory and Aquarium, Sarasota**

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