

Boat building firm uses Village know-how

From Our Anchorage Bureau

You might say it's a case of fishermen building boats for fishermen. From Sitka to Norton Sound, from Twin Hills to Cook Inlet more than 50 skiffs built by Marine Fiberglass, Inc., are plying Alaskan waters.

What makes Marine Fiberglass interesting is the people who own the company. Sid Collins and; Royal Lesher who found MFI in October 1974, own 49 per cent. The majority interest is owned by The New Stuyahok, Ltd., village corporation. New Stuyahok president Frank Woods, Jr., is also president of MFI.

Specializing in 18', 20', 22', and 24' fiberglass skiffs, the company will soon put the finishing touches on a 32' Bristol Bay gillnetter at its 10th and Orca plant in Anchorage according to designer Lesher, is the fruit of eight years of designing and refining and "is a whole new concept in a sense."

The gillnetters are designed for strength and stability and beaching ability, all essential to the Bristol Bay fishery. The boats will also include a jet drive diesel engine.

The 32-footers derive their hull strength from five layers of fiberglass and a ½ inch balsa core.

The first three gillnetters will be delivered to First American Enterprises, a venture of ten Bristol Bay fishermen. Up to ten gillnetters may be purchased by several canneries in region.

Village Know-How

Lesher estimates MFI can produce up to two skiffs a week and a gillnetter every two weeks. He said participation of the New Stuyahok village corporation made construction of the gillnetter possible by supporting

the design with their fishermen's know-how.

"They kind of demanded that this is what they wanted. There are many years of fishermen's ideas and my own in the design of the hull, which is a plus over run of the mill fiberglass boats," Lesher commented.

Lesher, who came to Alaska from Seattle 12 years ago, has "been building all my life." He is also a former mer-

chant marine and credited with building the first fiberglass boat to venture Bristol Bay waters.

The flat bottom gillnetters sport a main cabin complete with Vanco stove, stainless steel sink, formica counter tops, a settee with lockers and a table that can be converted into a bunk. There are two other bunks in the forward section.

Although the gillnetter seems likely to be popular with Bris-

tol Bay fishermen, skiffs will remain the mainstay of MFI. They come with outboards or 'inboards'; the 24-footers may be ordered with jet drive diesel.

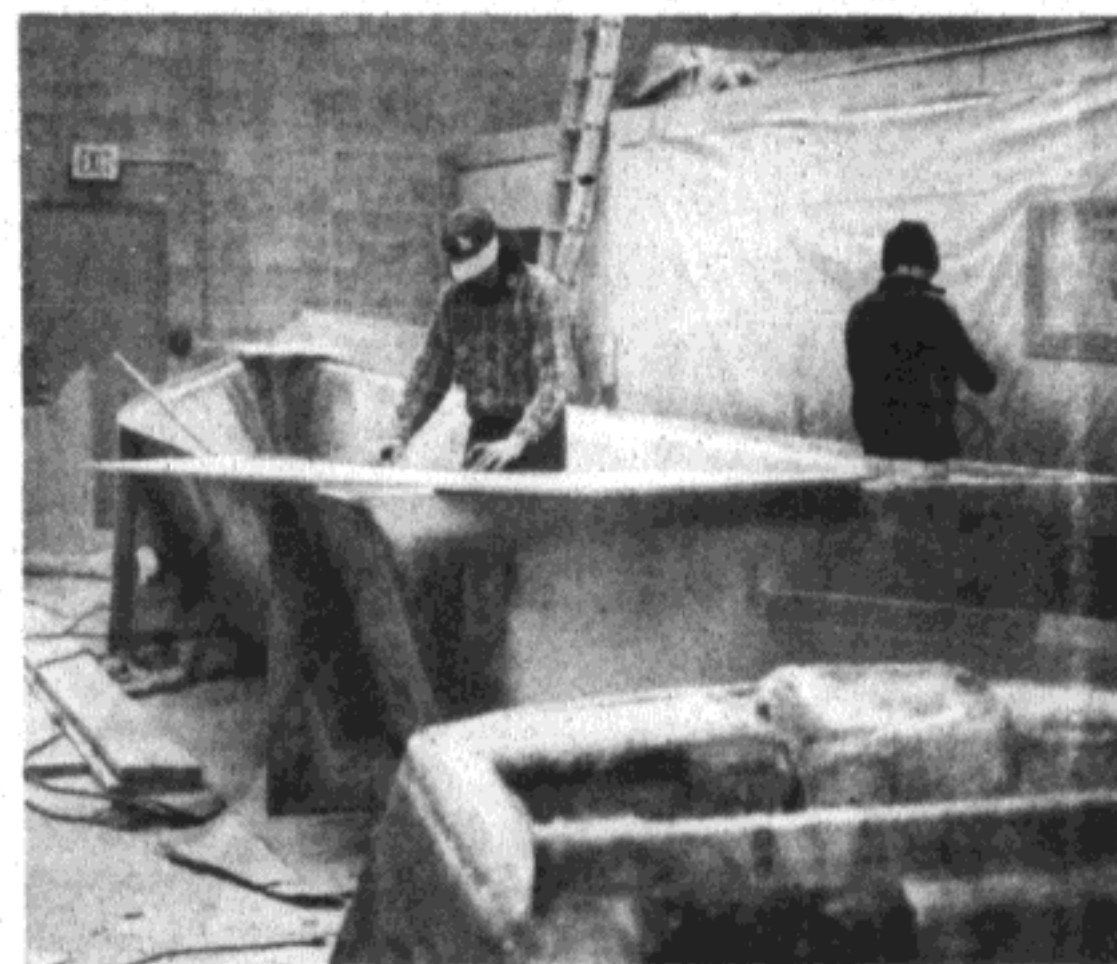
With wide beams and flared sides, the skiffs resemble traditional Cook Inlet skiffs. Cabins may be added on all but the

18' skiff.

Marine Fiberglass which prides itself on knowledge of fishermen's needs, also does fiberglass repairs of all kinds, and since January, has begun building housing panels for northern and Arctic house construction.



FISHERMEN BUILDING FOR FISHERMEN — Marine Fiberglass Company, a boat-building firm owned 51 per cent by New Stuyahok, Ltd. village corporation, specializes in fiberglass skiffs and Bristol Bay gillnetters. Marine Fiberglass, Inc., management and staff are pictured here at their Anchorage plant.



MFI MAINSTAY — Although Bristol Bay gillnetters are popular with fishermen, the mainstay of Marine Fiberglass Inc.'s production is the line of skiffs. Skiffs have wide beams and flared sides, resembling traditional Cook Inlet skiffs.

—Photo by JEFF RICHARDSON