Boat-Building Firm Brings New Lafayette Payroll

BY BOB ANGERS, JR.

South Louisiana is the work boat center of the world and three working partners have carved out a niche in this industrial empire with a plant on the Vermilion River in Lafayette that turned out 17 vessels during the first year of operation.

Tom Elbersen, John Bill Harrington and Ned Weeks revealed their talents and resources and a year ago they launched a boat-building enterprise called "Lafco." A new building with the most modern equipment went up on an 8 acres tract between the High Wallis Road and the river.

With an initial force of 20 shipyard employees, including the three partners, the new company was in operation. Lafco turned out 17 vessels that varied in size from a 16-foot mule boat for the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries to a 30-foot production boat for oil well services.

Dedicated to the purpose of building boats primarily of aluminum, as well as aluminum work, the company owners express optimism about the future and back their outlook with an announcement that the one-year-old building will soon be expanded to take care of orders.

While boat building is the main business, Lafco is helping the local industries, including the defense work and equipment. For example, they build brine pumps for Schumacher and Vege-Seal, and they make parts for Waukesha and other companies.

NEW LAFAYETTE INDUSTRY. This is the home of the one-year-old Lafco boat-building business on the Vermilion River in Lafayette. The high-walled, heavy-duty designed structure was built in 1964 by a Nebraska company and was expanded later for this year. It is completely equipped for modern fabrication and welding equipment.

Lafco's first product was the Four-Play, a 48-foot vessel that was constructed in 1965. It is the company's first major contract and was delivered to the Louisiana Marine Institute.

The company's second major contract was the 30-foot rigging boat, "Vista," which was built in 1966. It is the company's first major contract and was delivered to the Louisiana Marine Institute.

Lafco continues to expand its operations, with plans to build larger vessels and to diversify into other areas of the shipbuilding industry.

THE FINISHED PRODUCT. Here is a 20-foot production boat that was built by Lafco. The boat is powered by a diesel engine, has a capacity of six passengers and a speed of 27 miles an hour. It is used in the oil and gas industries.

Lafco is currently building a 40-foot rigging boat for the Louisiana Marine Institute and a 25-foot work boat for a local fishing company.

Industrial opportunities are unlimited for the Lafco shipyard, which is currently under construction and expected to be completed by the end of the year.

Harrington, the owner of Lafco, said, "We are building boats for all sectors of the industry, from offshore oil rigs to small fishing boats." He added, "We are proud to be a part of the growing shipbuilding industry in Lafayette, and we look forward to continuing to grow with the needs of our customers."