

Two Recreational Boating Industry Leaders Inducted into National Marine Manufacturers Association Hall of Fame

Stephen Heese of Chris-Craft Boats and Rick Reyenger of Patrick Industries to be honored with NMMA's highest award for achievement at the 2025 International BoatBuilders' Exhibition & Conference in Tampa, October 7

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The [National Marine Manufacturers Association](#) (NMMA) today announced the induction of two marine industry veterans into the NMMA Hall of Fame, the association's most prestigious honor. Stephen Heese, President of Chris-Craft Boats and Senior Vice President of Winnebago Power Systems, and Rick Reyenger, Strategic Advisor and past President, Patrick Industries' Marine group, will be presented with the 2025 NMMA Hall of Fame Award during the [International BoatBuilders' Exhibition & Conference \(IBEX\)](#) annual Industry Breakfast taking place Tuesday, Oct. 7, from 7:30 to 9:30 a.m. at the JW Marriott Tampa Water Street.

The Industry Breakfast, the official kickoff to IBEX, is expected to sell out. Tickets are available through the IBEX registration portal, either during registration or by logging into an existing account.

Stephen Heese

Heese is an entrepreneur and leader whose three-decade career has shaped both the marine and powersports industries. A Tampa native, Heese's passion for life on the water began early, fishing, sailing, and water-skiing along Florida's Gulf Coast. After graduating magna cum laude with a degree in Accounting from Tulane University and earning his CPA while working for Price Waterhouse, Heese completed his MBA at Harvard Business School in 1988, where he met his longtime business partner, Stephen Julius. Together, they embarked on ventures across the globe, acquiring and revitalizing storied brands.

In 1997, while living in London, Julius made a bold move into the marine industry by acquiring Italian yacht builder Riva Yachts from Rolls-Royce. This venture united the two partners and ignited a passion for boatbuilding that would shape the next chapter of their careers. After selling Riva to the Ferretti Group in 1999, Heese returned to Tampa with his family.

In 2000, Heese and Julius purchased the assets of Chris-Craft Boats, restoring the iconic brand as a symbol of American craftsmanship and innovation. Under Heese's leadership, Chris-Craft transformed from a struggling company, posting 11 consecutive years of losses into one of the top powerboat manufacturers in the country. He expanded the portfolio to five model series and spearheaded investments in state-of-

the-art manufacturing facilities in Sarasota, Fla., most recently opening a new 70,000-square-foot plant in 2023 that added 200 jobs.

Chris-Craft has also been recognized with NMMA's Customer Satisfaction Index (CSI) Award every year since inception, reflecting the company's focus on customer experience and service. He led the development of Chris-Craft's first all-electric concept boat, the Launch 25 GTe, and expanded the brand's international reach through partnerships in Asia.

Heese sold Chris-Craft to Winnebago Industries in 2018 and continues to serve as President of Chris-Craft and Senior Vice President of Winnebago Power Systems. He also briefly served as interim president of Lithionics Battery after its acquisition in 2023. Beyond Chris-Craft, he and Julius also revived Indian Motorcycle in 2004, before its sale to Polaris Industries in 2011.

"Steve has preserved and strengthened the heritage of one of the most iconic brands in marine history, while positioning it to be relevant with future generations," said Michael Happe, President and CEO of Winnebago Industries. "His revitalization of the Chris-Craft brand has been nothing short of extraordinary, and his vision has continually elevated the standards of quality, design, and customer enjoyment in boating. In addition to being a tremendous friend to many in the boating world, he is both a steward of tradition and a pioneer of innovation, an enduring example of leadership that defines our industry."

Heese is a Director and Past Chairman of the NMMA Board of Directors and has played a central role in advancing NMMA priorities, including licensing the Miami International Boat Show to Informa Markets, creating a substantial financial annuity for the association for years to come. Heese currently serves as Chairman of Independent Boatbuilders, Inc. (IBBI), the world's largest marine buying cooperative.

"Steve's leadership has revitalized one of boating's most iconic names while also strengthening NMMA and the industry as a whole," said Frank Hugelmeyer, NMMA president. "From steering Chris-Craft through remarkable growth to his dedicated service on NMMA's Board of Directors including leading the NMMA board through the COVID pandemic, Steve has been a consistent change agent and champion of innovation. His influence extends well beyond his own company, leaving a lasting imprint on both NMMA and the recreational boating community."

Heese lives in Tampa with his wife, Amanda, and enjoys fishing and all the boating lifestyle has to offer. They have three adult children, Madeline, Emma, and Cameron.

Rick Reyenger

With more than 40 years of leadership across the recreational boating industry, Reyenger's influence is evident in some of the most recognized brands in marine

manufacturing. His career began at Outboard Marine Corporation (OMC), where he rose to become president of OMC Canada and later led the Aluminum Boat Group. He also held senior leadership roles at Boston Whaler during its IPO period, at Mako Marine International during its saltwater growth phase, and at Tracker Marine Group, where he oversaw the Astro, Fisher, and Procraft brands.

In 2000, Reyenger became CEO of Marine Accessories Corporation (MAC), where he orchestrated an ambitious acquisition and integration strategy that transformed MAC into one of the industry's highly successful global suppliers. Over nearly two decades, he built the platform through more than a dozen acquisitions, expanded international reach, and led innovation in both OEM and aftermarket solutions, including products like TurboSwing, Monster Tower, and Westland. After guiding MAC's sale to Patrick Industries in 2018, Reyenger advanced through senior roles and was named President of Patrick's Marine Group in 2024, overseeing their full marine portfolio. He now serves as Strategic Advisor to the Marine Group.

"Rick is a transformative leader who has left his mark on every part of the boating industry," said Andy Nemeth, CEO of Patrick Industries. "From guiding legendary OEM brands to building Marine Accessories Corporation into a powerhouse, his vision and integrity have elevated the standards of innovation and collaboration across the market. He has mentored countless leaders, advanced industry advocacy, and continues to set the benchmark for what leadership in our industry should be."

Reyenger has served the industry well beyond his corporate roles. He was a long-standing member of NMMA's Marine Accessories & Components Division (MACD), where he championed aftermarket innovation, safety, and advocacy. He actively supports NMMA's BoatPAC and played a role in strengthening quality and standardization across OEM and aftermarket categories, aligning with NMMA's mission to elevate industry standards and expand participation.

His service extends into military service in the U.S. Army, community engagement through a family-run horse boarding and recreation facility in Georgia, and recognition as an inductee into the Eastern Nazarene College Athletics Hall of Fame for his achievements as a collegiate basketball player.

"Rick's career is defined by his ability to grow businesses while strengthening the fabric of the marine industry," said Hugelmeyer. "From his decades of service on NMMA boards to his success building global companies, Rick has consistently modernized the industry and advanced safety and participation in boating. His leadership and character embody the very qualities the NMMA Hall of Fame was created to honor."

Reyenger and his wife, Cheryl, who are celebrating their 50th wedding anniversary this year, call both Georgia and Florida home, where family and community remain at the center of their lives. Together they raised three children, and their family has since

grown to include 10 grandchildren and two great-grandchildren, with each generation making their mark around the world. Two of Rick's grandsons are continuing the family's boating legacy by working for marine dealers at Lake Lanier in Georgia. The Reyengers take great joy in time with their family and love staying active outdoors and on the water. To learn more about past NMMA Hall of Fame inductees, visit the [NMMA Industry Awards page](#).

IBEX registration is open and set to take place at the Tampa Convention Center, Oct. 7 – 9, 2025. Visitors and accredited press can [click here](#) for registration. For exhibitors looking to add booth staff, [click here for exhibitor registration](#). The Industry Breakfast sells out every year and tickets are available through the registration process, it is recommended to purchase them soon. Hotel bookings are available in the IBEX housing block, which includes several new downtown hotels, www.ibexshow.com/hotel-info. For more information on IBEX 2025, exhibiting companies, interactive exhibit hall floor plans, and more, please visit www.ibexshow.com