

Glasspar G-3

by David Seidman

Glasspar came very close to dominating fiberglass boat building in this country. For a brief period during the 1960s, they produced nearly half the boats made here, and were one of the few nationally distributed brand names—with factories in California, Washington, Texas, Tennessee, and Virginia. The company left its mark, not only in the sheer number of boats produced, but also in their style.

The Glasspar name is thought to have been derived from the company's first product, fiberglass spars for the Navy back in the 1940s. We do know that in the first years of the 1950s, William R. Tritt, designer and owner of Glasspar, working out of the Green Dolphin Boatworks in Santa Ana, Calif., was building fiberglass bodies for cars. One of these bodies, similar to a Jaguar and made to fit on a Jeep frame, was being sold as the G-2. Since little more was ever heard about this, we can surmise that Tritt redirected his energies into boats.

If not the first, then most assuredly the best known and most influential of Glasspar's early boats was the G-3 Skiboat. Introduced in 1959, it was known as the Corvette (another fiberglass masterpiece that had just entered the scene a few years before) of the waterways—13 feet 7 inches of low-slung, highly-styled, moderately priced (\$695) flash. The boat was in such high demand that Glasspar used the G-3 to pressure its dealers, allowing them only one G-3 per 25-boat order.

What made the boat so hot? Its looks, naturally, and its speed. At only 390 pounds and rated for 60 horsepower (the biggest motors of the day), it was a rocket. As motors grew



Patented sponsons give this restored 1961 Glasspar G-3 a distinctive look.

in power, and they did so very rapidly back then, bigger engines were piled on. A typical mid-sixties installation would be a Merc 80 or OMC 75, getting you up to near 50 mph. Over this speed, though, the boat has so much lift that it becomes unstable. Restored versions, now powered by up to 135 horsepower, have approached 65 mph but need power tilt and jack plates to stay under control. At reasonable speeds, the boat handles a chop comfortably but has a propensity to become airborne in larger waves.

The G-3's distinctive look comes mostly from its patented sponsons. These were for appearance rather than performance. Some owners believe they actually hindered the boat in a turn, keeping it from leaning and encouraging a bucking motion. On the other hand, they added to the boat's stability and carried extra flotation. The sponsons also made molding the hull extremely difficult, requiring the top half of the sponsons to be added after the hull was removed from the mold—a bit of careful engineering that is hard to detect in the finished boat.

Another nice construction feature was fiberglass stringers (after 1963), something that is still rare on the

best of today's boats. Glasspar also pioneered multiple gelcoats and unusual colors like black and gold.

The G-3 went through some minor changes during its production run, the most obvious being the deck configuration. It started as a split cockpit with a bench seat forward and a foam pad on the after sole. In 1962, the deck was changed to give more freeboard and a single open cockpit with two bucket seats. For some reason, the boat was not built in 1964, and then returned in 1965 with back-to-back seats for four. It stayed that way until 1968, the year Glasspar was sold to Larson. For a few years after, Larson offered their G-3, but it was a far cry from the distinctive original.

Want one? Thousands were built so there should still be some around. And to help those interested in the boat, there is an owner's association of about 150 members dedicated to sharing information about Glasspar and the G-3. For information, contact G-3 Owner's Association, 2205 Russet Leaf Lane, Virginia Beach, VA 23456. ■

Suggestions for boat to be featured in this column should be sent to Boating World, Classic Boat, 2100 Powers Ferry Rd., Atlanta, GA 30339.