



# BUTLER MARINE PRODUCTS, LLC

*by Alex Zidock Jr.*

Swim and transom platforms are extensions on the stern (rear) of boats of all sizes. They are positioned just one step above the water, making it easier to get in and out of the water or as added usable space. They also play an important part in recreational boating safety as they cover the boat's propeller(s). Butler Marine Products, LLC, manufactures swim and transom platforms for new installations and replacements. Customers agree that this company's quality and craftsmanship are one step above as evidenced by the current work flow at their shop in Duryea, Luzerne County.

When Michael Clarke left the Navy, he began working as an apprentice making boat parts. This was his true calling since he'd been at the same company for 37 years, but the big difference is now he owns the company.

"During the 1970s, the original owner made racks to hold horse saddles and feed bags for horses. He owned a sailboat, and at boat shows, he saw someone making and selling mounts and bow pulpits. He decided to also make and sell them," said Clarke. "He eventually sold that business to my former boss, who continued to make anchor pulpits, and he added swim platforms and boat ladders. I bought the business from him in 2009," said Clarke.

Clarke makes swim and transom platforms of all sizes, from ones that fit smaller runabouts to larger boats. "The largest we made was for a boat about 60 feet long. That platform was 17 feet wide and 5 feet deep," said Clarke.

"We do sell to individuals, but most folks don't want to take the chance drilling holes and applying brackets that support the platforms on their boats. So, primarily we ship worldwide to boat builders and marinas who install our products," said Clarke.

In the mid-20th century, boat manufacturers began the switch from using teak and mahogany to fiberglass. Now, most boats are made of fiberglass. "While I also make fiberglass bow pulpits and transom platforms, it's only 50 percent of my



photo-Alex Zidock Jr.



business,” said Clarke. “There are many older boats out there that were trimmed in teak or mahogany, and the owners want to keep them original. I make a replica platform or improve the design, using the original wood material.” For example, “One customer had a platform 15 inches deep, and he wanted it 24 inches deep.”

“We primarily use Burma Teak for all of our wood builds,” said Clarke. “It’s the best, and no other wood can stand up to the durability of teak in the marine environment. It’s also bug-resistant.” Fiberglass platforms and anchor pulpits are built without using foam or wood core. Platforms are epoxied with at least 10 layers of two different fiberglass cloth materials. “We also have an assortment of anchor rollers and accessories for anchor pulpits made of wood or fiberglass,” said Clarke. “And, we can match the color of a fiberglass pulpit to any boat color.”

“A lot of boats are not made with swim or transom platforms, and we can custom make one from wood or fiberglass to fit any boat,” said Clarke. “We have thousands of patterns in our files, and if we don’t have a pattern for a particular model, we build the platform from the dimensions provided by the installer.”

Since the platform protrudes from the back of the boat, it sometimes receives unintentional abuse and damage when banging against docks or other structures during tight maneuvers. “Making swim platforms to replace ones because of age or natural wear and tear or making a replacement for damaged platforms are a big part of our business,” said Clarke. “As long as there are old boats out there and newer boats being built without swim platforms, I don’t see my business slowing down in the foreseeable future.”

Butler Marine Products is close to big boating lakes such as Harveys Lake, Luzerne County, Lake Wallenpaupack, Pike and Wayne counties, and the Susquehanna River. As business permits, Clarke enjoys getting outdoors. “We have a camp and boat on the Susquehanna River, and I fish a lot,” said Clarke. “I like to tie trout flies, and I enjoy fishing for trout and bass.” ☐

## More Information:

[butlermarine.com](http://butlermarine.com)

◀ A teak swim platform for a smaller boat is crated and prepared to ship.

photo-Alex Ziback Jr.



*The first teak slats are glued and held in place with 3-inch stainless steel screws. Slats and blocks are put in place until this transom platform, for a 46-foot Grand Banks yacht, reaches 25 inches deep.*

photo-courtesy of Michael Clarke



*The final teak transom platform built by Butler Marine Products, Luzerne County, matches the original wood of this 46-foot Grand Banks.*

## Propeller Strikes

When people and motorboats share the same water, propeller strikes can and do occur. A typical recreational propeller can quickly rip a person from head to toe.

**MOST PROPELLER STRIKES CAN BE PREVENTED!**

