ADVERTORIAL

A Family Legacy



Building a legacy is no small task. Fjord, Inc. has spent the last 56 years crafting a company that offers the best in superyacht chafe protection. But a company is more than just the product it sells, and this family-owned business has the collaborative process down to a science, successfully creating products that deliver exactly what their clients need.

Fjord, Inc. was founded in 1967 by Gail and Capt. Edward Ratigan, a former U.S. Navy officer and an Unlimited Master Mariner in the Merchant Marine. While they originally designed and manufactured a nautical range-finding analog calculator, in 1991, Fjord turned to developing the patented Chafe-Pro® concept to protect marine lines from chafe abrasion.

"While Chafe-Pro is a family business, it was more of an idea and was just beginning when I was growing up," says Michael Ratigan, who took over from his parents in 2010. The family were avid sailors and most of Ratigan's adolescent years were spent cruising throughout the Marshall Islands, where his father worked, and Micronesia. "During the summers, I would work as an AB Seaman on tug boats and continued to do that throughout my college years," he says. While Ratigan believed in the concept of Chafe-Pro, "There was never an expectation for me to take over or even to get involved," he says. "I always knew and believed in my father's invention, but after grad school I wanted to do my own thing for a bit." He detoured into teaching, becoming an English teacher, swim coach, and rugby coach at a private prep school in Boca Raton. "[But] I knew that Chafe-Pro had an opportunity to become something bigger," he says. At the time, the company was primarily selling to the USCG, U.S. Navy, and several tug bo companies, but Ratigan believed he could expand into other market segments. "Chafe gear is often the last thing people think of when it comes to their ropes and lines, still to this day," says Ratigan. "As we have grown in sales and size, we have been able to bring attention to the need for chafing gear."

It's a small, niche market. "Prior to my father inventing Chafe-Pro, sailors would use firehose or canvas wraps and stitch the material in place on the lines," he says. "Chafe-Pro became the product it is today by experimenting with different textiles and weave patterns and listening to the feedback provided to us by our USCG customers." This allowed Chafe-Pro to develop the proprietary weave that makes them the best removable chafe device on the market. The nylon is woven specifically for abrasion resistance and Chafe-Pro guarantees their product will "outlast and out-perform any other removable chafe device when tested under the same conditions," Ratigan says. Chafe-Pro is also designed to protect the rope and increase its longevity, and the company works directly with rope manufacturers, supplying them with standard and custom designs and chafe solutions.

The spirit of collaboration has set Chafe-Pro up for success from the beginning, first with the weave, then with the Wooly, a sheepskin chafe guard that a chandler requested for their superyacht customers (and sourced from the New Zealand sheep farm where Ratigan spent summers during boarding school). The Chafe-Mat, which fits over cleats and protects the vessel's finish from lines, was also initially developed for Vanquish Yachts. "It has been welcomed in both the yachting and recreational boating community," Ratigan says. Chafe-Pro's Fender Hook also grew from the issues deckhands faced with bulky fender hooks. "We were constantly being asked if we offered anything different; this led us to the development of our patented (U.S. & EU) fender hook," says Ratigan. Their hooks are lightweight and fold flat, making stowage easier.

Chafe-Pro currently has a few patents in the works that are applicable to both the yachting and the commercial sector, so keep an eye out for new products on the horizon.

"The collaborative process with our customers is fun and exciting; we listen to their needs and the problems that they are facing, and we try to deliver a product that suits their needs," Ratigan says. "At the end of the day, we aren't just about protecting lines or ropes, we also protect our customers' investments. Whether it's the rope, the finish on the vessel, the vessel itself, or even the tow lines to recover NASA's Orion Multi-Purpose Crew Module after it splashes down in the ocean, Chafe-Pro is there."



Michael Ratigan with his father



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