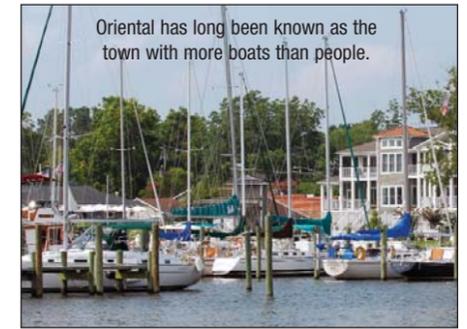


Madison, Angie and Allen Propst and their Lab Sampson like a backyard that is part lawn, part creek in Oriental.



Oriental has long been known as the town with more boats than people.

BY MONICA YOUNG
PHOTOGRAPHY BY SCOTT TAYLOR

Some people are lucky enough to be raised at the coast; others take a little bit longer to get there. Allen Propst, owner of Mariner Realty in Oriental and developer of the new Whittaker Harbor, set his sites on living in the quaint Inner Banks town when he was in college.

A native of Concord, NC, outside of Charlotte, Allen's family had made annual treks to Myrtle Beach, the closest beach and quickest drive from his hometown. But his 1973 visit to Oriental to duck hunt when he was a student at North Carolina State University is what set Allen's destiny in motion. While most college graduates go where the job takes them, Allen, a wildlife biology major, decided that he would do whatever it took to get him to Oriental.

That included working in commercial fishing, mosquito control, checking crab pots, serving as the countywide water superintendent and working in highway construction. Meanwhile, as Allen plotted the best way to make a living that would support himself, his wife and business partner Angie, children Nic and Madison, he earned his real estate license and wove together all of his experiences with his great love of Oriental.

In 1987, the Propsts opened Mariner Realty. Allen knew the land and what was available, thanks to his job with the county. He knew about laying road and putting in utilities after working in road construction. His wildlife biology background made him sensitive to ecosystems and conservation, and his new venture into real estate married these skills.

His first property investment hit the market at the right time, and he began building his real estate and development business.

Whittaker Harbor, Mariner Realty's latest development, is proving to be the crown jewel. The 66-acre property sits on Whittaker Creek and is the last large waterfront tract available in the town limits of Oriental, the small coastal village that has long been known to have more boats than people.

"Oriental's not that big," says Allen. "It's a limited resource. Whittaker Harbor is a choice spot where you can put out your own dock, walk or ride your bike to downtown." Allen

Heading Far East to ORIENTAL, N.C.

Allen Propst's deep hulled 23-foot Parker is perfect for Pamlico Sound chop or for heading closer inland.



Family boat rides sometimes involve stopping to check out property.

thinks one of the property's greatest amenities will be the 250-foot wooden bridge that will span the estuary wetland separating the two phases of the development. The Propsts chose the wooden structure because its design, in addition to meeting DOT standards, complements the development, making it an amenity rather than a distraction.

The heavily wooded, protected homesites are large and private, ranging in size from more than an acre to three and a half acres with large, mature trees and native palmettos. A pool, clubhouse and community dock round out the property. There are 18 waterfront lots in the two phases; nine are deep-water frontage. The community is situated for easy access to the Neuse River or the Intracoastal Waterway (ICW).

Boating is an important element for the Propsts. They are quick to hop into their 23-foot Parker that they bought two years ago from Morehead Marine.

"It's the best designed boat for the Pamlico Sound and Neuse River. The founder is well-aware of the Pamlico chop, which can be bone-jarring at times. This has a very soft ride with lots of fiberglass and a deep keel. It's a great family boat," says Allen.

Oriental's location makes it an ideal place for boaters wanting to

head to the north a bit or cruise down around Morehead City, New Bern and Beaufort. In fact, it's easier to go by boat for a lot of destinations. This proximity has always been part of Oriental's appeal.

Angie has a 19-foot Palm Beach that 17-year-old Nic, a counselor at Camp Seafarer, takes out with friends. Madison likes to perch up front and ride.

"This is just a great area, and we are blessed with great kids," says Allen. "This little town is a melting pot. It's artsy and creative. And people can't believe the number of tarpon 80 pounds and up that migrates up from mid-June to September."

"Honest to God, there's not another place I'd rather live," says Allen, who travels all over the country and the world to hunt. He always returns to Oriental, the town that became his college sweetheart, singing Oriental's praises and ready to add Whittaker Harbor to the chorus. 

Mariner Realty, Inc.

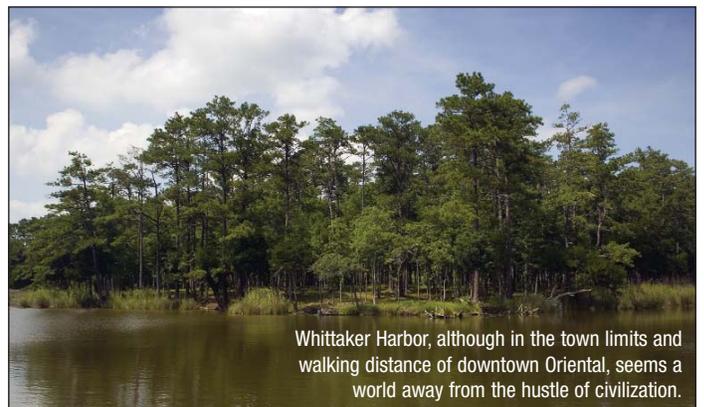
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Whittaker Harbor, although in the town limits and walking distance of downtown Oriental, seems a world away from the hustle of civilization.