

# Dream Boats: The vintage appeal of Trumpy yachts

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Some boats have stage presence. When they enter a harbor, every head turns. Trumpy motoryachts have that hard-to-define appeal. Like a Frank Lloyd Wright house or a Rolls Royce, they are a product of their time yet possess a timeless appeal.

Built from the 1920s to 1970s, Trumpy yachts are a study in elegance. Their sleek profile, crisp white hulls and polished wood detailing exude luxury and leisure.

Although more than 400 were built, each Trumpy was meticulously handcrafted to the owner's specifications. While every Trumpy is unique, the boats have a signature look and always the essential Trumpy embellishment: carved wood scrollwork on the bow that, on close inspection, incorporates a capital T. In their heyday, the boats were *de rigueur* for members of the aristocracy, among them aviation pioneer Howard Hughes, the Chrysler family and the Duponts.



The name comes from Norwegian-born Naval architect John Trumpy Sr., who began building yachts in Camden Yard in Gloucester City, N.J., but in 1947, Trumpy & Sons moved their shipbuilding operation to Annapolis, Md. When Trumpy Sr. died in 1963, his son John Jr. continued the tradition until 1974, when a triple play of rising costs, labor strikes and the popularity of fiberglass put him out of business.

Perhaps the most famous Trumpy was the *USS Sequoia*, built in 1925 and now a designated National Historic Landmark. It might also be the most famous boat in the United States. The elegant 104-foot vessel served as the U.S. presidential yacht from the Herbert Hoover administration in the 1930s until Jimmy Carter had it auctioned off in 1977 for \$286,000.

The *Sequoia* was the setting for many notable events: FDR and Eisenhower planned D-Day onboard; Truman made the decision to drop the bomb on Hiroshima, Kennedy celebrated his last birthday, and Nixon spent his last night as president aboard (accompanied by a bottle of whiskey) before resigning the next day.

Truman reportedly had a fit of rage onboard when he lost a poker game and damaged the table with a cigar cutter. In a calmer moment he had a piano installed in the main salon that he and Nixon enjoyed playing (although in separate decades). Hoover raised some hackles by featuring the *Sequoia* on the 1932 White House Christmas card at a time when so many Americans were struggling to buy food during the Great Depression.

The yacht fell into disrepair after it was sold by Carter and became the subject of [rancorous legal entanglements](#). More recently the *Sequoia* got a \$5 million makeover and has returned to Washington, D.C., waters. It is now available for [charter](#) or special events.

Trumpys are the ultimate Dream Boats. It's easy to envisage a leisurely, even presidential afternoon aboard, dining in formal elegance or fishing off the back deck. Many of these boats have been lovingly cared for over the years and still show up on the market. Our gallery (at the top) features four beauties currently for sale, from a 1937 model to the third-to-last Trumpy built in 1972.

















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