

Closer to a Ship

Large yachts built by Benetti of Viareggio, Italy, are step-up choices for many customers of Richard Bertram & Co.

By JACK SMITH





SELLING yachts of 75 to 100 feet and more is nothing new to Richard Bertram & Co., brokers operating out of Miami and Fort Lauderdale, Fla., and New Orleans, La., but its dealers in new boats built by Gulliver and Bertram Yacht, the largest model they could offer toward the end of last year was a 78-footer. That would be more than enough for most yachtsmen, even when a base price of close to half a million is not a concern, but knowing that a market for still larger yachts existed among their own customers and elsewhere, the company sought out a builder.

Last October, after evaluating various alternatives, Jim Schaefer, executive vice president of Richard Bertram & Co., went to the International Boat Show in Genoa, Italy, to meet with representatives of Cantieri Navili Fratelli Benetti, well-known builders of large custom yachts. Following a visit to the Benetti yard in Viareggio, during which Jim was greatly impressed by the workmanship, an agreement was signed between the companies, and, as of last November, Richard Bertram & Co. became exclusive marketing representatives for Benetti yachts in North and South America.

Viareggio, located on the shores of the Ligurean Sea, is about 25 minutes north of Pisa by car. Originally it was a fishing village, and fishing is still very much a part of it, but the area north of the harbor is an attractive seaside resort, with a line of cabins, shops and cafes behind the beaches, separated from hotels and restaurants by a broad, tree-lined promenade and a motorway. Back in the town, marble is common in curbstones and the windowsills of even modest homes, and a few miles inland, the mountains from which it derives rise as a scenic backdrop. I went there on the third of June, when the sun burned in a cloudless sky and the rising temperatures had quickly nurtured abundant crops of giant strawberries.

Benetti is a busy complex spread

Over to right: An older Benetti yacht of about 128 feet in the refitability, and three new ones of 68, 100 and 78 feet being finished off after launching.