



left: An easygoing nature combined with 25 years as a professional boatbuilder makes Karl Weinart a perfect instructor. **below:** Students at Karl's boatbuilding school put the final touches on a 15-foot pirogue before launching the boat in his pond.



Boatbuilding School

Karl and Debi Weinert launch a new kind of business in the Big Sandy area.

The barn on the Weinert ranch looks like most others in this part of Tennessee: stacks of hay, a few old farm implements, and a couple of chickens pecking around out back. On the day I arrive, however, Karl Weinert busily prepares for an event no other barn in the state can boast—a boatbuilding school.

In two days, Karl claims that I will transform a veritable pile of lumber into a boat that will float in his pond. I pack away my skepticism and pull on my farm boots in anticipation.

History of the School

The school resides amid beautiful rolling land and seems an unlikely place to learn how to build boats—until you meet Karl. His very nature speaks of water and wood. His 25 years as a professional boatwright seeps into everything he touches.

The house he shares with his wife, Debi, for instance, features more nautical details than a houseboat, and his nearly restored Cris-Craft glows with otherworldly beauty. This man turns everything into something grand.

Karl and Debi started the school in Big Sandy after years of living in coastal Florida and dreaming of life on a farm. “We bought a small farm in North Florida,” says Debi. “But we wanted a little more acreage. We decided to move up here to get some room to stretch out and for a little seasonal change—something besides hot or hotter.”

At first, opportunities for Karl's skills as a boatbuilder seemed lacking in northwest Tennessee. But the Weinerts decided if you can't live