

August 2005

# ncboatinglifestyle

The Lifestyle Magazine For Every North Carolina Powerboat Owner

**HOT FUN**  
*in the  
Summertime*



[ncboatinglifestyle.com](http://ncboatinglifestyle.com)

Brent Bruner jokes that he bought his Kiser Island home to accommodate his boat.

# Calling Kiser Island Home

By Cindy Hodnett  
Photography By David Wilson



**B**rent Bruner's pathway to boating and homeownership at Lake Norman includes as many turns as the winding road that leads to his Kiser Island waterfront retreat. A self-described "workaholic" in the past, Bruner, a successful entrepreneur and real estate investor, now spends many mornings watching the sunrise from the comfort of this renovated Catawba county home. Although he admits that he would never have predicted such an aquatic-oriented lifestyle for himself years ago, Bruner adamantly asserts that he wouldn't change a thing.

"It was 1988, and a good friend of mine who also worked in the real estate profession kept trying to get me to go to Lake Norman with him, even though he said my idea of an exciting weekend was checking the lock boxes on all my vacant properties," says Bruner with a chuckle. "Well, I kept making excuses until it got to the point that I thought I was going to lose a friend if I didn't go. So, I finally said okay and we made plans to go out the next Sunday."

"This was in February, and that morning when I woke up, it was sleeting like crazy," Bruner continues. "Truthfully, I was relieved because I didn't really want to go, so I got up and was having my morning coffee when the phone rang. It was my friend and he said, 'Hey, you're two Bloody Marys behind!' I said, 'You're kidding, right? We're not still going?' And he said, 'Oh, yes we are!'"

"So we hit Interstate 40, and there are all kinds of people off in the median in the grass, and everyone is slipping and sliding all over the place, and here we are like a bunch of idiots on our way to Lake Norman. It was so unbelievably slick that when we got there we had to go down the gangplank sideways. We even let the cooler go at the top, and it just slid all the way down!" After several moments of precarious boarding, the determined party set out over the chilly, wintry water. Bruner openly admits that



Brent Bruner's renovated Lake Norman home includes water views from every room.

although he was still less than excited about the outing, the natural beauty of Lake Norman soon began to work its magic.

"We got on the boat and my friend put on a pot of clam chowder," he recalls. "He turned on the heat and every once in a while we'd get out on the dock and feed the ducks, and then get back on the boat and warm up when we got cold. That's how we spent the afternoon, and it was very peaceful and relaxing."

"A couple of days later, my friend called and asked how I had enjoyed the trip," says Bruner. "When I told him that I had enjoyed it very much, he said that if I could have that much fun on a day like that, I should try to imagine how much fun a pretty day would be. So we went out again on a nice day - still in February - and we again had clam chowder, along with smoked oysters this time and that was it - the hook was set."

Once Bruner decided to buy a boat, he followed his friend's advice and first began looking for a covered slip. When he found a marina under construction, Bruner decided to take advantage of the opportunity, and leased a large slip even though he didn't yet own a boat.

"I tell people that I had to buy a boat that would fit the slip," laughs Bruner. "So I bought a 25-foot Four Winns Cruiser that slept four. From that point on, at five o'clock every Friday, the kids and I were on our way to Lake Norman, and we'd stay on the boat until Monday."

By this time, Bruner was well into the spring real estate market, and spent his weekdays negotiating property transactions. However, weekends were reserved for lake time and like many boat owners,



Bruner eventually decided that he was ready for something bigger.

"I special-ordered the boat I have now - a 31-foot Sea Ray Sundancer," he says. "I knew by then that I loved boating, so I bought the biggest boat I could possibly afford at the time and selected all of the special features I wanted including hot showers, a generator, a queen-size V-berth and removable fireplace that I use in the winter. I can't even count the number of times I've sat on the lake in February in my shorts and T-shirt eating ice cream!"

At this point, Bruner was living in his condominium Monday through Friday and living on his boat on the weekends. He says he was "extremely happy" with his life, but once again a determined friend brought about big changes.

"I've made many lifelong friends at Lake Norman, and one of these friends who knew about my real estate interests kept telling me that I needed to take a look at a house that was coming on the market soon," says Bruner. "I told her that I didn't need another yard, and that I really liked my floating condo. But just like my friend with the boat, she kept insisting. So I went over to the house, the owner met me with my favorite drink and we had a wonderful meal of scrambled eggs and homemade strawberry jam. I looked out over the water as we ate, and once again, the hook was set."

One of Bruner's first decisions as a Kiser Island homeowner was to build a covered boat dock for his beloved Sundancer. After the dock was finished, complete with phone, Internet and cable TV, Bruner turned his attention towards the house. One of only a dozen Kiser Island residents, Bruner wanted his renovated property to blend in well with the surroundings while also offering him the necessary amenities for the "perfect single person's home."

"My builder, Brad Newton, custom-built this house over 14 months, and we never had so much as raised eyebrows - much less raised voices - during the entire process," says Bruner. "I wanted to build a home where everything I needed for daily living was on one level, and I wanted to preserve the original house. I completed the upstairs level for future resale value, and we included a separate entrance to the upstairs so it could be a satellite office for any of my real estate friends working in the Lake Norman area."

Newton also added a four-car garage for Bruner's collection of rare vintage,



The 31-foot Sea Ray Sundancer is loaded with special options, including a removable fireplace.

luxury cars. On the back, the pair designed a spacious, open porch that overlooks the water, and this particular area of the house has become one of Bruner's favorites.

"The sunsets at Lake Norman are unbelievable, and when you're sitting on the porch with a wine cooler looking at the water at the end of the day - well, there's nothing else quite like it," says Bruner with a smile. "People ask me how I can drive so far back and forth every day and I tell them, 'you just have to see one sunset to understand.'"

Today, Bruner and his cat Gilligan, enjoy lake living both on and off the water. "What else could you name a cat that lives on an island?" he jokes. Forty-eight linear feet of glass on the back side of the house allows him to see the water from every room of his home, and he still sets out in his Sundancer most weekends.

"I take the boat out every Saturday and Sunday to go to breakfast at Midway Marina," says Bruner. "And I have a favorite cove that is a great place to anchor and spend the night. You know, when you get up on a boat, and the mist is coming up off the water, and the fish are jumping - hey, that's just not too shabby."

