



[By Robert Burns](#)

NEW SMYRNA BEACH – The enchanted little boat looked like something from a fairy tale, as it slipped silently across the smooth surface of Indian River Lagoon. Turning on a dime, the 18-foot long electric boat cruised past other vessels — adjacent mariners stared as the non-traditional, yet classically designed “Duffy” eased by.

“It’s certainly unique,” said pilot Harold Brandner, as he waved back at his momentary neighbors. “My wife Eva and I, have always loved to come out onto water of the Indian River, however, there was always a nasty problem.” As the New Smyrna-based boaters would cruise at idle speed – the noise and fumes would be unbearable. “You have to go slowly in these waters, so regardless of how beautiful the day is – you’re stuck in a toxic cloud of fumes constantly following you.”

Harold decided he’d do something to try to help eliminate New Smyrna’s rolling smog banks, one gray cloud at a time. “Eva and I travelled out to California, to see the Duffy Electric Boat Plant, we were impressed.”

Founded in 1970, the Duffy Electric Boat Company has come a long way in the past 39 years. Stopping in at the company’s Web site — [www.duffyboats.com](http://www.duffyboats.com) — the first Duffy looked like some kind of college prank, a golf cart engine powering a beat-up rowboat. Since then, Duffy’s have become highly successful in areas which are speed controlled (no wake zones, 5-6 knot speed for all boats) or where no gas powered boating is allowed. In fact, places just like New Smyrna Beach’s Indian River.

“I think this area is ready for a clean, quiet alternative to this explosion of gas-powered boats.” So, Mr. Brandner went out on a limb and established a Duffy Electric Boat Dealership here in New Smyrna Beach – covering the entire Central Florida Area. “We have found a tremendous number of boaters and non-boaters who are seeking a quiet alternative to messy and loud outboards,” said company spokesperson Kerry Peters, “Additionally, they are drawn to the ease of operation and the minimal maintenance required.”

While Mr. Brandner’s background is in the mechanics of keeping engines running (he owns BMC Car Care at 828 N. Dixie Freeway), if there’s any trouble with a Duffy motor, it just comes out and goes back to the factory from whence it came. While the classically appointed cruising vessel may look like a throw-back to an earlier era, it’s a far cry from the African Queen. “Yes, its hull is made of hand-crafted fiberglass,” said the proud pilot, “and the propeller is made of a carbon-fiber composite. This boat has almost no carbon footprint.”

Down the center of the boat, underneath the deck, runs a row of standard batteries - capable of being recharged in 12 hours. Standard 110 AC household current is all that is required for the onboard charging system. “Most docks are equipped with this type of circuit,” said Mr. Brandner, “A simple overnight charge readies the boat for full operation day after day.” On average, it

## **Cruising the Open Seas**

Wednesday, October 14, 2009 02:12 PM

---

costs about a dollar to charge up a Duffy. That charge will allow a full day's cruise. Duffy Electric Boats range in size from the tiny, 5-passenger, 14-foot "Shamrock" – up to the dozen passenger, 22-foot "Cuddy". Prices of the different models of Duffy vary, depending upon size of the boat and amenities. You can find out more by calling (386) 314-9010.

"We're having a grand opening party at the dock at the Grill at Riverview, on the southeast side of the North Causeway Bridge, Saturday, Nov. 7th," smiled hostess Eva, "we're hoping everyone who has even dreamed of boating, will join us for this unique opportunity."