

Making a Difference

Bold Strokes

Marine wildlife artist Guy Harvey nurtures his cause along with his business.

► **GUY HARVEY** is the consummate turn-your-passion-into-a-business success story. Educated as a marine scientist, Harvey has never taken a proper art class. But at 58, his art keeps him wildly busy—researching marine wildlife on a boat, painting in his home studio in Grand Cayman and channeling revenue from his paintings to ocean conservation.

Harvey, the scientist, earned high honors in marine biology at Aberdeen University in Scotland in 1977; seven years later he received a doctorate in fisheries management at the University of West Indies. So it's logical that when he's not painting, Harvey prefers to be on a boat. "He lives to go on the water," says Steve Stock, president of Guy Harvey Inc. and the Guy Harvey Ocean Foundation.

Guy Harvey Inc. is a privately held company that puts licensed images of his artwork on garments and other products. Last year Harvey steered more than \$1.5 million in company profits to his foundation, which supports ocean conservation and education—and he also raised money for other worthy causes close to his heart. Stock says the charitable givebacks encourage repeat business and are why "so many young people dig our stuff. We are genuine, a company that does more than just talk about making a difference."

The heartfelt philanthropy starts with Harvey. "He's the antithesis of corporate America," Stock says. "We work our butts off, but we have fun, laugh, and we give back. He gives back so much time and resources and has been doing it for 20 years."

Harvey also assists schools and other nonprofits, including U.S. veterans' groups. "I have rooms full of letters from people who are so appreciative of our help," says Stock, explaining that a private company is nimble enough to act quickly as needs arise. "Guy is first to say, 'Let's do it.'" For example, after the 2010 oil leak in the Gulf of Mexico, Harvey launched the Save Our Gulf campaign,



selling 50,000 T-shirts at \$10 each in two months. The profits hired researchers to diminish reef damage.

Finding His Destiny

Despite his Scottish roots, Harvey grew up in Jamaica. He pleads guilty to a lack of conservation efforts in his youth, but "now we can make amends and educate the

Christina Boyle Cush wrote about Len and Cherylann Gengel's Be Like Brit Foundation and Haitian orphanage in the August issue.



COURTESY OF GUY HARVEY INC.

next generation. My kids are much different in thinking about nature. I was always intrigued by it, but now I have a desire to learn what more I can do to help.” (His daughter, Jessica, 22, who has a zoology degree and works in the Department of Environment for the Cayman Islands, and Alex, 20, a business student at the University of Cardiff in Wales, share a passion for conservation and their dad’s business. They fold clothes, work the register and do grunt work at the Grand Cayman store. “I know they will carry on my legacy,” Harvey says.)

His enthusiasm for art budded in his teens. When Harvey left for boarding school and college in the United Kingdom, he eased his homesickness by drawing ocean wildlife. And when he’d return to Jamaica for holidays in the mid-1970s, Harvey peddled his small oil paintings of game fish for \$20 to \$50 a pop at fishing tournaments. Later he sold his art to supplement his teaching income.

“Science influenced my art,” says Harvey, who adds that authenticity—detailed, true-to-life renderings of the marine creatures he studied—is a key to his works. And the closer he got to ocean wildlife, the more he realized it was suffering. Becoming aware of the need for conservation led him to his philanthropy.

In 1985, his wife, Gillian, organized Harvey’s first one-man show at a Bahamas fishing tournament. A year later, his U.S. debut was the Fort Lauderdale (Fla.) International Boat Show. “I sold every single piece. It was eye-opening.”

He cautiously turned from academia toward the business of painting, planning to put his licensed images on T-shirts. To learn about business and the licensing process, Harvey turned to friend Scott Boyd, a tackle store owner in Fort Lauderdale, and Boyd’s business partner, Charlie Forman. “Charlie



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incorporated my business in Florida and got me organized with copyrights and registration, which became increasingly important to my career,” the artist says. “Licensing was my greatest breakthrough because it provided guaranteed monthly payments, which became substantial. Your art is working for you while you’re out fishing or diving, so you’re not constantly at the easel.”

Harvey put all his royalties back into his company. He managed his family’s expenses by living simply—something he still does. “I drive an 11-year-old Ford pickup. My boat is not a yacht; it’s a 10-year-old, 26-foot center console.” His work uniform is shorts, a T-shirt and boat shoes.

He incorporated in 1986–87. “I did trade shows, art shows, fishing tourneys and personal appearances to get the T-shirts up and running in the coastal lifestyle product genre. There was a huge amount of work in building this brand”—and frequent travel. “My wife has put up with a tremendous amount of separation during our 25 years of marriage. I made a point of calling every day. That really helped. Now we Skype, text and email.”

Still Growing Strong

Meeting Stock in 1992, when he was marketing director of the Florida Marlins baseball team, was a boon for Harvey, whose products sold like hot dogs at the ballpark. Stock joined Harvey’s team as

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a consultant in 1997 and helped restructure the business (including creation of the Guy Harvey Ocean Foundation). Today Bass Pro Shops, Sports Authority, Dick's Sporting Goods and other national chains sell his merchandise.

Even though Harvey's company is expanding into women's totes, wraps and swimsuits, and even into housewares (such as linens), he keeps a lean staff and stays hands-on. He has two full-time foundation employees, a dozen full-time business employees, and 10 part-timers or freelancers. His company has come a long way, but one big goal remains: penetrating the New England market.

Facebook, with 400,000 Harvey fans, will help with that; it's been a mainstay for expanding the reach of his products and for test marketing. "Facebook is our most significant tool in letting everyone know what's going on. We put shorts on our page and get an immediate reaction," he says.

Additional customer interactions will come from stores opening in Florida during the next six years. Stores will offer the advantages of controlling presentation and merchandizing, and being able to experiment with ideas, says Harvey, adding that a previous retail venture failed. "The Guy Harvey Island Grill restaurants, which had sustainable seafood and retail space, were a disappointment. Someone we dealt with... stopped paying his bills, so I had to [close the restaurants]. It was embarrassing."

But he believes the new stores will succeed. At a Miami boat show, for instance, he filled a 3,000-square-foot room with merchandise that was a near sellout. "And people come off the cruise ship in Grand Cayman, come to the one store I have there now and go nuts." Compared to the limited Guy Harvey product lines they had seen in the big stateside stores, he says, "They had no idea I had such a wide range of stuff."

Some of his most enthusiastic customers commission tattoo artists to permanently ink replicas of Harvey's bold sharks, marlins and other iconic images onto their bodies. "People do it because they love the art," he says. "I'm a fairly conservative guy, but it's a huge honor for me to have them want my art forever on their body." **S**

MORE MR. NICE GUY

Cause-marketing helps marine wildlife artist Guy Harvey sell merchandise, and his passion for ocean research and education has led him to make a difference on many fronts. His recent efforts include:

- Raising awareness of sharks' dwindling numbers. His shark documentary, *Tiger Shark Express*, premiered in June in Florida. He did nine shoots about a variety of endangered fish in 2012 and will continue to debut documentaries on humpback whales, tiger fish, marlins and more.
- Partnering with Virgin conglomerate entrepreneur Richard Branson and other A-listers on the Caribbean Challenge project to create special protected zones along more than 20 percent of the region's coasts by 2020. Their objective is to thoughtfully sustain tourism (which brings in roughly \$20 billion a year and supports 2 million jobs) while shielding the area's biodiversity. They need to persuade all of the islands to sign on as well as figure out how to raise the \$50 million or more necessary to finance the project.
- Participating in the first Tortuga Music Festival, a spring 2013 benefit concert on the Fort Lauderdale beach that featured Lynyrd Skynyrd, Kenny Chesney and other stars. Revenue from ticket sales and merchandise sold by Harvey and ocean-minded corporate partners benefited conservation.
- Generating the Florida Lottery's second series of the Guy Harvey \$2 Scratch-Off tickets. Last year's version was one of the best-selling \$2 scratch-off games in Florida lottery history—12 million tickets sold in five months. Ticket royalties will benefit the Guy Harvey Ocean Foundation.
- Co-sponsoring the catch, tag and release Shark's Eye fishing tournament this July in Montauk, N.Y.



Guy Harvey and Richard Branson

JIM SCHEINER AND PAUL HUBBARD, RAINBOW VISIONS PHOTOGRAPHY, 2013