

Slane, Willis Howard, Jr. ^[1]

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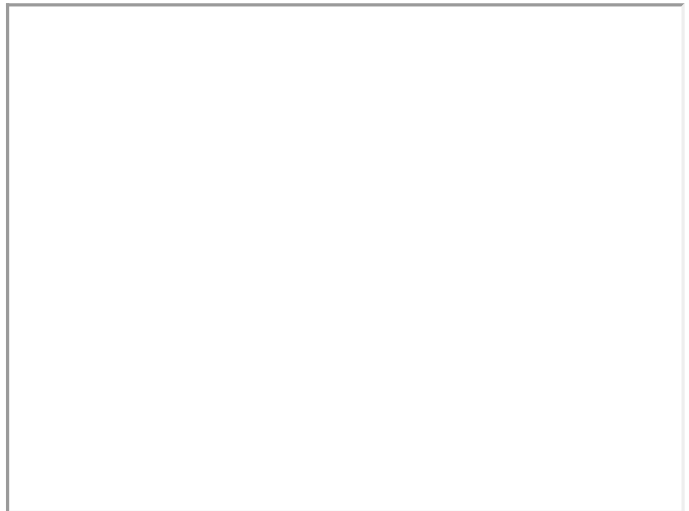
by Stacy N. Kirkman, 1994

21 Apr. 1921–8 Sept. 1965

Willis Howard Slane, Jr., [aviator](#) ^[2] and businessman, was born in [High Point](#) ^[3], the eldest son of Willis Howard and Meredith Clark Slane. His primary education included studies at Raymond Riredon School in Highland, N.Y., and McCallie School for Boys in Chattanooga, Tenn.

In his youth Slane was profoundly influenced by meeting Colonel [Charles Lindbergh](#) ^[4], who gave a speech in [Winston-Salem](#) ^[5], and became intensely interested in flying. He attended Riverside Military Academy in Gainesville, Ga., and Parks Air College (now part of St. Louis University) in East St. Louis, Ill., and received a private pilot's license after training in 1940. This experience saw practical use during [World War II](#) ^[6]; at twenty-one, Slane was the Army Air Corps's youngest civilian instructor. In February 1943 he entered the Air Corps as a second lieutenant, flying in the Foreign and Domestic Ferry Service and Military Air Transport Service. Later he flew the Burma Hump while carrying cargo to China. He left the service at the end of the war with the rank of first lieutenant.

After entering the family business, Slane Hosiery Mills, in 1945, Slane became president in 1954. In 1956 he was elected chairman of the National Association of Hosiery Manufacturers. Though he presided over the [Guilford County](#) ^[7] Pilots Association and the Hatteras Marlin Club, his main concern remained in hosiery manufacture until an encounter with a small fiberglass runabout sparked his interest in a project to construct a large fiberglass cruiser, then thought impossible. Collecting local investors, Slane incorporated Hatteras Yacht in 1959 and was elected chairman. High Point was selected for building because of the availability of skilled furniture craftsmen, in spite of its distance from the ocean. The first yacht, at forty-one feet by far the largest fiberglasshull boat ever attempted, was launched on 22 Mar. 1960. A photograph illustrating the fact that one of the early yachts survived 1961's Hurricane Carla in Galveston, Tex., established graphically the sound judgment of constructing in fiberglass, which revolutionized the industry.



Slane continued to introduce even larger craft as advances in technique permitted but died suddenly of a heart attack. Survivors included his wife, Doris Stroupe Slane, and three sons, Willis Howard III, Thomas Vance, and Robert Clark. He was buried in the Slane vault of the mausoleum at Guilford Memorial Park between Greensboro and High Point.

[YouTube video above](#) ^[8]: video recording of Willis Slane, a contestant in CBS' gameshow "To Tell the Truth." Aired January 15, 1962. Willis Slane is in the third group of contestants and is identified as #2.

References:

Hatteras World, Summer 1980.

High Point Enterprise, 11 Mar. 1962.

Miami Herald, 3 Mar. 1940.

Motor Boating, June 1962.

Slane family papers (possession of Mrs. Willis H. Slane, Sr., High Point).

Additional Resources:

"Willis H. Slane Jr." *Motor Boating*, October 1965. 116. http://books.google.com/books?id=t_PQ2OUdTv0C&pg=PA116&lpg=PA116&dq=#v=onepage&q&f=false ^[9] (accessed May 6, 2014). [Pen and ink portrait.]

Video of Willis Slane: CBS. "To Tell the Truth." Video Recording. Aired January 15, 1962. [Willis Slane is in the 3rd group

of contestants; he is identified as #2.] <https://youtu.be/QD5L1yzFIRk> ^[8] (accessed June 6, 2015).

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Authors:

[Kirkman, Stacy N.](#) ^[15]

Origin - location:

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[Guilford County](#) ^[17]

[High Point](#) ^[18]

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[Dictionary of North Carolina Biography, University of North Carolina Press.](#) ^[19]

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