



UNLIMITED NEWSJOURNAL

A Chronicle of Speed

What is the winningest hull in unlimited hydro history?



BY ANDY MUNTZ

Not long ago, a follower of this sport on Facebook asked what seemed to be an elementary question: “What is the winningest individual hull in hydro history? Winged Wonder? Blue Blaster?”

It turns out that getting to the answer requires a deep dive into the obscure world of hydroplane data and brings with it the kind of debate that hydro nuts love to have, and what we love

to publish in the *Unlimited NewsJournal*. So, here we go.

You should know that the most successful hull in hydro history is neither of the two options our questioner proposed, but that’s getting a little ahead of ourselves. Before determining the winningest individual hull in history, two foundational questions first need to be resolved:

What is a boat? What is a race win?

Both questions seem simple enough to answer until you scratch below the surface. When contemplating what is a

race, for example, consider the case of Guy Lombardo and his famous *Tempo* VI.

According to the most common database that tracks hydro hulls, the *Tempo VI* is credited with a total of 15 race victories during the late-1940s and early-1950s. Some of those wins, such as the 1946 Gold Cup and 1948 Detroit Memorial, certainly belong in the boat’s tally. But, what about events such as the 1949 Maryland Sweepstakes Regatta in Baltimore or the 1953 Marine Festival Free-For-All in Long Beach, New York?

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I'm sure Lombardo treasured the trophies that he earned at those two events, but for the purposes of this study, both would not count as a race victory. The rule book says that for a race to count as a race there must be at least three starters. Being one of the nation's best-known band leaders at the time, Lombardo was no doubt in high demand to make personal appearances at boat racing events, but many of those included only his or maybe one other Gold Cup-class or Unlimited boat.

So, while the total for *Tempo VI* might appear to be 15 race victories, it was actually only seven, and that's including the boat's victory in the 1939 Gold Cup while it was named *My Sin*. (*My Sin* also won the 1941 Gold Cup, but it was the only starter, so again—no race.)

What is a boat? Scratching below the surface some more uncovers the example of the *Miss Budweiser* that is commonly identified as the T-3. The hull was originally built in 1989 and accumulated a total of 15 race victories through the 1994 season. Then, it was rebuilt—extensively. So extensively that when the boat appeared the following season, only some of its sponson parts remained. Most importantly, the hull's entire center section had been replaced.

The T-3 *Budweiser* went on to win another 18 races in its rebuilt form, which combined with its

previous victories would give it a total of 33 and make it the winningest hull in the sport's history. But those who keep careful track of such things argue that when the center section of a boat is replaced, it's considered a new boat. Consequently, for the purposes of this study, the T-3 counts as two different hulls: the first known to hydro nuts as Hull #8901 and the other categorized as Hull #9501.

By the way, about those hull numbers. To keep track of the different hulls, each is assigned a four-digit number. The first two digits indicate the year that the boat first appeared in a race and the last two digits indicate the number that the boat carried when it debuted. The *Miss Home-Street* that won last year's national title, for example, first appeared in 2018 with the number U-1, so it will henceforth be identified as Hull #1801.

With those ground rules established, here then is the list of the winningest individual hulls in the sport's history:

1) Hull #0116 (*Miss E-Lam Plus, Ellstrom, Spirit of Qatar*), 27 race victories.

The current winningest hull in the sport's history was built during the spring of 2001 by E-Lam team members Scott Raney, Danny Heye, Dale VanWieringen, and Nate Brown, who also served as driver. Along the way, the team expressed confidence that they were building something that was going to be special. "We have seven years of experience to draw from this time and we tested several innovations on the old boat last year," said team owner Erick Ellstrom.

The *Miss E-Lam Plus* was launched in late July, after it had missed the entire eastern portion of the 2001 season, then three days later, was in the pits for the Budweiser Columbia Cup in the Tri-Cities, where Brown promptly drove it to a test lap of 154 mph its first time out. He then turned in a qualifying run of over 159 mph later that day, although the mark, the fastest seen that day, was later erased because of a fuel flow violation. Nevertheless, a positive impression had been made. "I've never been in a race boat this fast before," Brown said.

The new *E-Lam* went on to win the last two races of the 2001 campaign and would have a career that lasted another 11 seasons. During that time it would collect 27 race victories, including

At the top of the list for winning the most races in hydroplane history is Hull #0116, shown here as it raced in 2002 with the name *Ellstrom* painted on its deck.



Hydroplane and Raceboat Museum



Hull #0001 is pictured here during a test run on Lake Washington when it made its debut on June 15, 2000. The boat has gone on to collect 26 race wins, the second most in hydro history, and is still an active competitor, seeing action last year as the U-12 *Graham Trucking*.

five Gold Cups, and would win national titles in 2005, 2007, and 2011. In addition to Nate Brown, its drivers during that career included Terry Troxell, J.W. Myers, and Dave Villwock.

The boat was damaged during its appearance at the UIM World Championship at Doha, Qatar, in early 2013 and never returned to action.

2) Hull #0001 (*Miss Budweiser, Formula, Graham Trucking*), 26 race wins.

There's a chance that the 2020 season could include a change in the top spot among the winningest hulls because the second-place boat is only one victory behind the leader and is still very active. It won the last three races of the 2019 season, in fact.

Hull #0001 began its career as the last in the string of *Miss Budweiser* turbine entries and is sometimes known as the T-6. It was built during the late winter and early spring of 2000 and launched on June 15, having missed the season's first race at Lake Havasu City, Arizona.

"This boat is our best work of art," Dave Villwock proclaimed, then drove it to victory at the boat's first appearance 10 days later in Evansville, Indiana. The

boat won the Gold Cup in 2002, Bernie Little's last, and is credited with the national titles in 2003 and '04.

After Little's death in April 2003 and the demise of the *Budweiser* team following the 2004 season, the hull became the crown jewel in the sale of the team's assets to Ted Porter, who then ran the boat as the *Formula* for five seasons, as the *Valken.com* in 2011, and then as the *Graham Trucking*, a name that it has

continued to carry since 2012. Before the 2017 season, the hull was sold to the boat's sponsor, Rob Graham.

During its 19 years of competition, Hull #0001 has accumulated a total of 26 race victories, including two Gold Cups, and added a third national title in 2013.

3) Hull #8701 (*Miss Budweiser*), 25 race wins.

Also known as the T-2, the second turbine-powered boat campaigned by the *Miss Budweiser* team, this boat saw action for only seven seasons, but during that time amassed an impressive record that includes two Gold Cups and four national championships (1987, 1988, 1991, and 1993).

Affectionately called "Thumper" for its unique handling and turning characteristics, the boat was driven by Jim Kropfeld (1987–88), Tom D'Eath (1988 and 1990), Scott Pierce (1991–92), and Chip Hanauer (1992–94). It is currently owned by Joe Little, Bernie Little's son, and can sometimes be seen as a *Miss Budweiser* display boat, operating from its base in Lakeland, Florida.



Jim Dunn

Third in the standings for the winningest boat in history is Hull #8701, which collected 25 race victories as the *Miss Budweiser*. It's shown here as it appeared during its first season.



TOP: The "Blue Blaster" won a total of 24 race wins while Bill Muncey drove it from 1977 through 1981. It's shown here on Lake Washington during its first test run. **ABOVE:** Making its debut in 2007 was Hull #0706, seen here as the *Oh Boy! Oberto* with Steve David driving. The boat is still active. It raced last season as *Oberto Super Salami* and is expected to compete in the 2020 campaign.

4) A tie between Hull #7701 (*Atlas Van Lines*) and Hull #0706 (*Oh Boy! Oberto*, *Oberto*, *Miss HomeStreet*), both with 24 race wins.

The first is the famous Blue Blaster, the boat mentioned by the person who initiated this exercise, and the other is a current competitor

that could potentially still add to its win total.

Hull #7701 was a part of the deal that came Bill Muncey's way when he purchased the *Pay 'n Pak* racing team from Dave Heerensperger following the 1975 season. Jim Lucero, the team's crew chief, designed the craft to take advantage of his aerodynamic ideas, made it

lower in profile than was common at the time, and put its cockpit in the bow, in front of the engine. That last feature was a big departure for Muncey, but he nevertheless relented to the idea and made it one of the most dominate boats of the late 1970s. During its five seasons, the boat won three Gold Cups and two national titles.

Tragically, Muncey was killed at the wheel of the boat as he drove it in the World Championship race at Acapulco, Mexico, in October 1981. It has since been restored by the Hydroplane and Raceboat Museum in Kent, Wash., where it can be seen on display and is sometimes a participant in exhibition appearances at Unlimited events.

Hull #0706 first saw action in 2007 as the *Oh Boy! Oberto* and with Steve David at the controls. More recently, the boat was driven by Jimmy Shane as the *Miss HomeStreet*, and last season carried the name *Oberto Super Salami* and was driven by Jeff Bernard. This coming season will see its operation entrusted to John Goodman, an experienced auto racer who is new to Unlimited racing.

Owned by the citizens of Madison, Indiana, the boat has been the sport's most dominate performer in recent years. In addition to winning 24 races, including three Gold Cups, it has an impressive total of eight national championships (2008, 2009, 2010, 2012, 2014, 2015, 2016, and 2017).

6) A tie between Hull #8700 (*Miller American*, *Miss Circus Circus*, *Winston Eagle*, *Smokin' Joe's*) and Hull #9712 (*Miss Budweiser*, *Formula II*, *Graham Trucking*), both with 23 wins.

Hull #8700 has been owned by several people, has one of the longest careers among the top race winners, and has seen action with a long list of names. Built for Fran Muncey, the widow of Bill Muncey, it was launched in May 1987 before a huge crowd of excited fans but then laid an egg when Chip Hanauer fired up its



ABOVE: Hull #8700 is shown here as it looked in 1987 when it made its debut as the *Miller American*. The boat would go on to have names such as *Miss Circus Circus*, *Winston Eagle*, and *Smokin' Joe's*. **LEFT:** The boat known as T-5 is shown here after it was christened in 1997 as the *Miss Budweiser*. It can claim the distinction of being the fastest boat in the sport's history and is still racing, seeing action last year as the U-7 *Spirit of Detroit*.

turbine to leave the dock and quickly discovered that when he turned the steering wheel to the right, the boat went left.

The backwards steering was easily fixed, yet it wouldn't win a race until the following year, when it was sponsored by Bill Bennett and his Circus Circus Hotel and Casino. Muncey sold the boat and the rest of her operation to Bennett after the 1988 season, it saw action as the *Miss Circus Circus* for three seasons, then was sold to Steve Woomer. With Mark Tate driving, the boat raced as the *Winston Eagle* from 1991 through 1993, as *Smokin' Joe's* from 1994 to 1996, as *Close Call* in 1997, and was always in the thick of things. It still holds the all-time speed record for a competition lap of 161.712 mph set in 1993 and for the all-time race average of 156.830 mph set in 1997.

The boat was sold to Kim Gregory after Woomer's death in April 1998 and was later owned by Dave Bartush. During its last 14 seasons of racing from 2000 to 2013 it was given many, many different names, such as *York*, *EM-COR*, *Miss Al Deeby Dodge*, *Spirit of Detroit*, *Miss DYC*, *Tubby's*, and *Miss DiJulio*. During its career it won four Gold Cups and the 1990 national championship.

Hull #9712 was built as another *Miss Budweiser*, this one known as T-5, is another speed record holder, and is another boat that is still active. It actually first raced in 1996 and was assigned Hull #9601, but was extensively rebuilt the following winter and emerged with a new center section, thus being reclassified with its current identification. It raced together with Hull #0001 (the T-6) through much of its career. Both

boats would qualify then one or the other would be used in the race depending on the course conditions.

One could easily argue that Hull #9712 is the fastest Unlimited hydroplane in history. At the 1999 San Diego race, Dave Villwock drove it to a qualifying run of 173.384 mph, a mark that remains the fastest ever recorded. On March 13, 2004, Villwock again made history when he drove the boat through a one-kilometer course on the Thermo-lito Afterbay near Oroville, Calif., and averaged 220.493 mph, which is still the fastest speed ever recorded by a propeller-driven boat.

After Bernie Little's death, the T-5 and the T-6 boats both became parts of Ted Porter's team, where Hull #9712 raced with names such as *Formula II* and the *Graham Trucking II*. It was then sold to Dave Bartush in 2017 and still competes. Last season the boat raced as the *Spirit of Detroit* and was driven by Bert Henderson. In addition to its speed records and its 23 race victories, which includes one Gold Cup, the boat won a total of five national titles (1999, 2000, 2001, 2002, and 2006).

8) A tie between Hull #7325 (*Pay 'n Pak*, *Atlas Van Lines*, *Rich Plan Foodservice*) and Hull #8012 (*Miss Budweiser*), both with 22 race victories.

It's only fitting that two iconic Unlimiteds would share the same win total. Hull #7325 is the previously mentioned "Winged Wonder" *Pay 'n Pak* and Hull #8012 is the well-known Griffon-powered *Miss Budweiser*. Not only are they both historic in their own right, they have both been restored by

the Hydroplane and Raceboat Museum, and sometimes make exhibition runs at Unlimited events.

The *Pay 'n Pak* was launched to great fanfare in April 1973 and was an immediate hit with the fans because of its revolutionary new look, which featured a horizontal wing suspended above the transom. With Jim Lucero as its crew chief, it also was a winner pretty much right out of the box. Driven by



Hydroplane and Raceboat Museum



Hydroplane and Raceboat Museum

Two of the best-known boats in the sport's history are tied with having the eighth most victories. **TOP:** This version of the *Miss Budweiser* was launched in 1980 and was powered by a Rolls-Royce Griffon engine, a more powerful cousin of the Rolls Merlin that was commonly used at the time. **ABOVE:** The "Winged Wonder" *Pay 'n Pak* is shown here during its first test run at Seattle in April 1973. The boat immediately captured the interest of fans with its wing. Both boats have been restored by the Hydroplane and Raceboat Museum.



Hull #9501 is shown here at the shores of Lake Washington on the day it was launched after being extensively rebuilt following the 1994 season. The boat was changed so much, it was considered a new hull. Known by fans as the T-3, it had won 15 races while racing as *Miss Budweiser* from 1989 through 1994 and would go on to win another 18 races in its rebuilt state. The boat is now owned by Dave Bartush, who has plans to race the boat again.

Mickey Remund, George Henley, and Jim McCormick, it would win the national title in each of the three years it raced as the *Pay 'n Pak* then won another the following year, after it was sold to Bill Muncey and he raced it as the *Atlas Van Lines*.

The boat would spend the bulk of its career under the ownership of the City of Madison, Indiana, where it had a wide variety of names painted on its deck. Among them was the *Miss Madison*, *Dr. Toyota*, *Frank Kenney Toyota/Volvo*, *Rich Plan Foodservice*, and *American Speedy Printing*. It was retired after the 1988 season having won two Gold Cups and four national titles (1973, 1974, 1975, and 1976).

Hull #8012 was a near-identical replacement for a *Miss Budweiser* craft that was built in 1979 to challenge the dominance of Bill Muncey and his *Atlas Van Lines*. Powered with a mammoth Rolls-Royce Griffon engine, that boat was destroyed late that year as Dean Chenoweth drove it in an attempt to set a world straightaway speed record.

Bernie Little immediately ordered another Griffon-powered *Miss Budweiser* built and it made an immediate impact, winning the national champion-

ship in each of its first two years. Sadly, Chenoweth was killed driving the boat in 1982, so Jim Kropfeld took over and remained in the cockpit through the 1984 season. Little introduced another Griffon-powered boat in 1985, this one called the "Bubble Bud" for its enclosed cockpit, but the new craft struggled with various issues early in the year, allowing its old reliable Hull #8012 stablemate to be pressed into service once more.

The boat was sold to Jerry Kenney that following winter, was re-powered with a turbocharged Allison engine, and finished out the rest of its racing career with names such as *Frank Kenney Toyota/Volvo*, *Pietro's Pizza*, and *Miss Northwest*. The boat raced for the last time in 1991, completing a career that included two Gold Cup victories and three national titles (1980, 1981, and 1984).

10) Hull #9501 (*Miss Budweiser*), 18 race wins.

We've already briefly discussed the career of this *Miss Budweiser*. It started life as Hull #8901, also known as T-3, then was so extensively rebuilt during the winter following the 1994 season that it emerged

in 1995 as a new boat, thus earning it a new ID number. It continued to race for six more seasons with Chip Hanauer, Mark Evans, Mark Weber, and Dave Villwock as drivers then was replaced by other *Budweisers*.

Following the death of Bernie Little, the boat was sold to Kim Gregory's USA Racing Team and appeared in 2006 with *EMCOR* and several other names on its side. But, when Gregory died late in the 2008 season, it was put aside again. Hull #9501 last saw action in 2012 when it appeared briefly as *Degree Men*. Dave Bartush has since purchased the boat and says that he has plans for it to return to racing.

If you count all of the races it won as Hull #8901 and as Hull #9501, the boat would have a total of 33 race victories and would have been the first hydroplane mentioned in this story. But, alas, our rules prevent it. Instead, its official tally is 18 race wins, including three Gold Cups, and it is the holder of three national championships (1995, 1997, and 1998). ❖

Billy Schumacher continues to discuss his remarkable career.

Last month, in part two of our interview with Billy Schumacher, the champion boat racer discussed his move into the unlimited class driving Cutie Radio, Miss Tool Crib, \$ Bill, Miss Bardahl, and Parco's O-Ring Miss. In part three, Schumacher talks about driving Pride of Pay 'n Pak, his time competing in tunnel outboard marathon races, his involvement in the U-95 project, and his return to the unlimited class aboard Valu-Mart. The interview was conducted on May 29, 2019, by Craig Fjarlie.



Hydroplane and Raceboat Museum

UNJ: After the 1970 season, did you know you were going to have the Pay 'n Pak ride the following year?

Schumacher: I have a shortness of memory when it comes to 1971. I don't know if I raced.

Yes, you won the last few races.

Oh, that was with Pay 'n Pak.

Yeah.

That's right, that was Pay 'n Pak year.

And in '72 you raced until Madi-

son and quit because of the debris in the water.

Right.

But in '71, Jim Lucero was crew chief. How was he for you to work with?

Fabulous.

Yeah?

With the Bardahl I had to watch the manifold pressure constantly. Of course, a lot of that was our high-dome pistons.

We built quite a few engines in 1968 and that accounted for a couple of races that I lost, too. Once again, that year my starts weren't the best and I'll admit it, but I felt I had a good enough boat to pass anybody anyway. And I did. But we broke engines because of my pushing the boat harder than I should have, but I felt they were gonna live like they did in '67, and then unfortunately, they didn't.

We blew up a few. Mostly manifold

pressure, I think, that caused a lot of that. When I got to the *Pay 'n Pak* with Jim Lucero, I said, "How much manifold pressure should I look for, and where should I stop?" He said, "Manifold pressure? I don't want you to even look at the gauge. Just stare at where you're going and win the race."

Mmm.

"I don't want you to even look at the gauges." He said, "You can do that during testing and let me know what's going on but forget it in the race." And you know what? In my whole career with *Pay 'n Pak* and Jim Lucero, I don't remember breaking an engine. I don't think we broke one single engine.

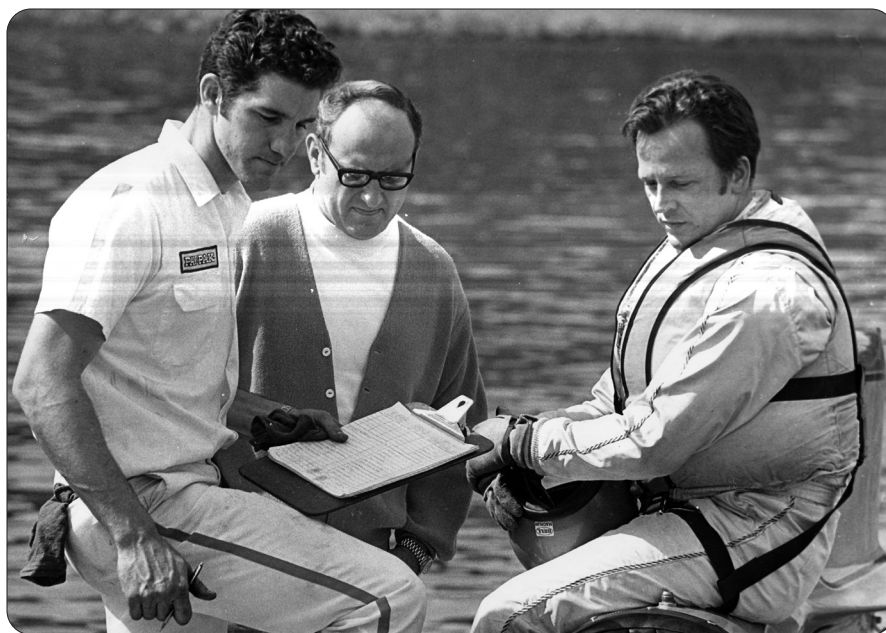
I don't think you did.

I was able to put my foot on the floorboard I don't know how many times and leave it there and use the nitrous before two laps were over. And never break an engine. Totally amazing to me, even to this day. I'm amazed at that. And you know, my accident with that boat set us back a few paces. It was turning left at 155 miles an hour, and that's what caused that, because of the keyway in the rudder.

It took me a while to build confidence in it again. One of the races that year that I did win, in Dallas, I was going to the first turn testing and there's a rockery. It was at the first turn, so if you didn't make the turn you were gonna be in the rocks.

Oh, yeah.

I got down to that turn and turned for the corner and the steering wheel wouldn't turn. It locked up. What happened was a bolt came out, vibrated out of the steering system, and when I went to turn it hit the frame in the boat. It wouldn't do anything. It turned to the right but not to the left. So, I'm going pretty fast into that first turn and when that happened, I just turned off all the switches I could see and held on to the steering wheel and got up onto the deck, ready to jump off if I had to. But it stopped before the rocks. After my experience in Miami where I almost got



Greg Gilbert

The *Pride of Pay 'n Pak* team in 1971, from the left, crew chief Jim Lucero, team owner Dave Heerensperger, and Billy Schumacher

killed, to have another steering problem happen in the same year, that was a big concern to me.

Sure.

I lost confidence. I really did. I lost confidence in the boat and some of the people working on it. Not mentioning any names, but it should have been corrected. Those things should not have been happening. So, all of that led to kind of an ill feeling between crew and driver.

And, you know, when the water was horrible in Madison [in 1972], I mean to the point of seeing tires and cows, stuff floating down the river—the river was dark brown, the buoys were laying on their sides from the current and you could see logs coming down. To race on that, I just said no. The rest of the drivers in the evening said no along with me. So, when race day came, they all said, "OK, I'll do it." Except me, I said no.

Yeah.

After the race when Sterett didn't get killed, or nobody else got killed from hitting anything, there was some boat damage and stuff but nothing serious happened, then the crew started

thinking that I was just afraid of the boat. After the race, that upset me to the point that I just got in my motor home and drove away.

Mmm, yeah.

I wasn't very nice about it, but I figured the next race was a week or two away and they could find somebody else. I should have gone to Heerensperger or Lucero and said, "Look, I've had enough of this and I'm not gonna do it anymore," but I didn't. I just drove away. So, they hired Bill Sterett, Jr., to drive the next...

He finished off the season.

You know, they won that race, I heard. I wasn't there, but I heard the boat was completely out of shape many times, but he drove it hard enough to win. They were pretty proud of that fact that they won it. I wasn't drivin' it. So, there were some pretty bad feelings between Heerensperger and me.

Yeah.

Actually, and Lucero, for a while.

To back up just a little bit to 1971, that was the year Madison—you were still coming off your accident in Miami—won the Gold Cup on their home water and then they won

"I had a bucket of Bardahl that I would sit on in the truck, away from everybody, and I would just think about what I was gonna do and how I was gonna do it. How I was going to be concentrating on what I needed to do to win. Period."

The *Pride of Pay 'n Pak* heads out onto the Columbia River at the Tri-Cities, Wash., in 1971.

at Tri-Cities, the next race.

Yeah.

In Seattle you won, and you won a race in Eugene, and then Dallas. You finished off the season winning three races. Except for that incident in Dallas, things seemed to be better in '71, the end of the year.

Yeah, the boat was faster. We had tried different skid fins and made it corner better. It was a goal of mine to set the course record in Seattle in qualifying, which we accomplished. Just barely, but we did it. I started liking driving it again. It was a fast boat that I could use the engines as hard as I wanted to use 'em and I didn't have to worry about breaking 'em. That helped a lot, too.

I felt like we had something really going there. But, I don't know, things happen in racing that you don't expect. That thing in Miami really was an experience, you know. Going back to your thing about the Madison race and Tri-Cities, I think Jim McCormick got on a roll. They had, with that *Madison* boat, they had put nitrous in it. I think I could have actually won that Gold Cup, but he was faster than I expected him to be, and, uh, legitimately won the race.

Yeah.

I couldn't really go much faster. I think I

could've made a better start or something where he didn't get the jump that he got and, uh, done better. It could've been driver error as much as anything but, my hat's off to the way Jim McCormick drove the boat, and they had nitrous in it. He drove the pants off that boat, and it showed. Once you're on a roll like he was in winning the Gold Cup in Madison, he showed everybody it wasn't an accident and he did a really good job.

During those years—this is kind of an overview question—a lot of fatal accidents were happening. Were you worried about that being a possibility for yourself in racing as well? This is a dangerous game...

Constantly.

...can I survive this and still have fun?

That was mostly on my mind in the *Bardahl* days, because of what happened to Ron Musson and others in those years. I had a bucket of Bardahl that I would sit on in the truck, away from everybody, and I would just think about what I was gonna do and how I was gonna do it. How I was going to be concentrating on what I needed to do to win. Period. That was my goal. And I wasn't the most friendly guy in the world on my way to the boat when it came time to race. In other words, people needed to just get out of



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my way. I didn't want a slap on the back, a slap on the hand. I didn't want anybody saying anything to me. I was just tunnel-vision down to the boat and got in it.

Yeah.

I didn't even want crew guys sayin' anything to me. I'd been on my bucket and I knew what I was gonna do, and I was thinking about it the entire time. I was very thankful to come back in one piece after every race.

A couple of times you were pretty lucky.

Yeah, that went through my, uh, I was lucky, probably, in my career, talking about Unlimiteds only, probably four or five times. And that's what really led me to quit when I quit, at 36 years old. You know, that's pretty young today, but my thought was one of these times my luck's gonna run out.

Yeah.

There were several times when it was out of my control and I was just flat lucky. And so, there was a lot more I wanted to do in life other than race boats. That's when I decided to quit.

Those people who got killed were on my mind a lot.

Like every driver you think, well, if I'm watching my p's and q's, I'm gonna get through it OK where they don't. We just think that. I still concentrated on every effort that I did to be safe about it, about the dangerous sport I was in. As safe as I could be and still do well. So, yeah, it was on my mind a lot. And you know, it's tough when you see people, I mean, there were a couple of times when people got killed where I actually knew something was gonna happen. You just know.

Yeah.

In a couple instances I could tell that the driver's not thinking clear. Just wasn't thinking clear. The only thing on their mind was to win at any expense. That was never a problem with me. I did not have that attitude. I just knew that was not a healthy attitude, something could possibly happen. And it did. So, yes, it was on my mind constantly.

Well, after you resigned from Pay 'n Pak in '72, you got into the tunnel boats.

Yes.

That was a different type of racing.

When I left [Madison], I drove directly to California 'cause I enjoyed living there. I convinced my wife at the time, Cyndee, to live there with me. She thought that would be great. Sunny California and all that. So that's what we did. Ron Jones found out I was there—Ron Jones, Sr.—and he had built a tunnel boat that people didn't like driving, and called one day and asked if I'd test it. He said a fellow named Rick Keller owned the boat. He was from Yorba Linda, California, which wasn't far from where I was living. I lived in Marina del Rey at that time.

A friend of mine built Scarab offshore boats. So, he and I were playin' around with that. I almost became a partner with him, and I wish I had, but I didn't. I was messing around with off-

shore boats and then when Jones asked me to drive that tunnel boat, I did, at Lake Elsinore. I came back and reported to him that it was an extremely tricky boat to drive and that it wasn't one of my favorites to drive.

Keller told me, "Well, we can get another boat 'cause I'd like you to drive for me." He was going to get another boat after we raced this one, the Jones boat. So that concerned me a little bit because when you get in the heat of a race you drive with more, harder than you should in most cases in order to win. I knew that was a possibility.

The first race we were in was in Arizona with that boat. I got to drive it second. We had two drivers. It was a long race. He'd drive for an hour or two and then I would and then he would, and so on. So, he got the first time. In his first run at it he crashed the boat and broke it. So that was the end of that boat. I never did race it, didn't have to race it. Rick Keller bought another tunnel boat. It was a Scottie, which was one of the popular boats back then.

Yeah.

We were not a factory team, but Jack Leek who ran the factory was a friend of mine. I had done work for him on his lower units, as I mentioned earlier. He was watching me quite carefully, and I beat the factory team several times with the Keller boat that was not factory-supported. Jack noticed all of that. I think I won five or six races that first year with Keller.

My first race was at Lake Havasu. I don't know how many boats there were, but close to a hundred boats and we wound up third. At the end of the race I had learned how to drive it well enough where I was gaining on everybody about 15 seconds a lap. Had the race gone on another 10 laps I'd have won the race. We wound up third and I was real close to getting second. Just one more lap and I'd have been in second. So, you know, Jack Leek noticed that right away, too. So, I wound up driving for him in Paris. And

we wound up winning that race in Paris.

That was a big race in those days.

Biggest, yeah. A hundred and five boats started the race. I drove with John Sanders. We shared. He drove an hour-and-a-half, I drove an hour-and-a-half. I mentioned this when the museum had the trophy presentation. I had to give a speech for their Hall of Fame thing and I mentioned in that speech that we won the race in Paris. Well, I didn't mention that I'm still the only guy to ever win it his first year there. And I didn't mention the fact that we won by six laps, which was really quite an accomplishment.

I only got the chance to drive with John Sanders there because I had beaten the factory so many times with a non-factory boat, and Jack Leek knew me and knew that I had the potential of doing really well with a factory boat. So, after that everything changed at OMC and with that circuit, and I wanted to go back to Unlimited racing.

OK.

I had a really successful career driving tunnel boats. People wondered how I was able to do it, but it came from my outboard experience.

All those years.

It was a challenge to me, which made it even more interesting, because they were tricky to drive. I did blow one over. I blew Rick's boat over in Elsinore. I don't think it was the first race with his boat, I think I had won a race or two before then. I raced at Elsinore. My father was there and there were several other people that I raced outboards with. In outboard racing we learned a few tricks on how to get an engine started. Instead of tryin' to start it in the water, you lifted it out of the water.

Yeah...

Once it was running, they'd drop it in and off you go. Well, those tunnel boats were heavier because they had a lot of fuel and the engine was bigger and all in the back, so it took about four guys to lift it out of the water. We weren't doing that at first, but I was getting beat with

my inexperience and all that. I was getting beat off the line quite often, until we started lifting it up. That's another story, but we got beat off the line in Elsinore and I was back in seventh, eighth place, maybe even a little farther back.

In tunnel boats you run so long anyway it doesn't matter. If you're good, if that boat's fast and you're good, eventually, you can win. We were catching everybody, and I remember Rick [Keller] telling me on the radio that I was gaining 30 seconds a lap at the end. And he said, "You need to come in for fuel on this lap," and that was after I passed the pits. It was about a six-mile course. So, I went down the river and there was a big ol' boat in front of me. Inboard, I think, or maybe a twin-outboard or something, but it was throwing a pretty good wake.

I was light on fuel and pretty cocky in this thing 'cause I was screaming with it. I danced over the top of his wake and it came down after his wake, hit the water, and that bounced it back up again. I wasn't quick enough on the down-tilt from the motor to catch it and it went over backwards. I was going over 105 miles an hour. It flipped over backwards and came down. The nose of the boat hit the water and spit me out. I got out of the accident in just, I mean, I hit that water at

that speed, which knocked the wind out of me and did some facial damage, but nothing serious.

The boat really didn't get hurt that badly. It was all repairable. I wound up in the hospital for a day with a really bad chest from hitting the water. It didn't break anything but I'm sure it bruised some lungs and things. So, I was taught a lesson on that, which is not to get cocky with a tunnel boat. It'll only go so far before you string it out. I had it really up dancing. You don't want to get to that critical edge, you just don't.

Yeah.

I learned that. We won several more races after that and we won in Paris and I won the Muncey Invitational in Miami with tunnel boats. So, I had learned pretty much how to drive 'em and felt good about my chances in the future there, but my goal was to get back to Unlimiteds. So, I went to watch the race in Seattle when Les Rosenberg owned a brand-new boat. I think it was *Valu-Mart* at that time, and he wasn't really happy with his driver.

Before we go into that, in '73 were you under consideration for the U-95. Did Chuck Lyford talk to you about that at all?

Oh, it's interesting that you asked



Bob Carver

Billy Schumacher was involved in the early stages of the U-95 project, which resulted in the first successful use of a turbine engine in an unlimited.



that question, because after my tunnel boat experiences and all, during that time I met one of Rick's good buddies named Jerry Barker.

This is Rick Keller?

Rick Keller, owned the tunnel boat that I drove out of Yorba Linda...

OK, yeah.

...and Jerry Barker and I became good friends because he had a tunnel boat that he wanted to build into a pleasure boat, and have Ron Jones, Sr., build it. I think he built the one that I test drove for him. We became very good friends and I wasn't really interested in doing that. There were some changes that needed to be made in the pleasure boat/tunnel boat to make it as they are today.

I wanted to race Unlimitees. I didn't want to get down full time in that kind of stuff right then. I was still pretty young and had some piss and vinegar left in me and I wanted to go racing. So, I didn't do that with Jerry Barker. But we became good friends and he asked me right after that if I was interested in looking at turbine power in Unlimited racing. I said, "Sure, I'll look at that. They're running out of Rolls Merlins. They need to do something."

Yeah.

He said, "Well, I have a good friend in Seattle that's interested in maybe doing a turbine Unlimited hydroplane."

Hmmm.

So, I went to work immediately and did a lot of research on turbines and came up with the turbine that we're running today, the Lycoming that we're running today. I found a guy in California that did gear boxes. I came up with the gear box

they use, basically, some of them are using today. I came up with all of that and then went to APBA, or what did they call it back then?

The URC, the Unlimited Racing Commission.

Yeah, URC. I spoke with Bernie Little, Lee Schoenith, Buddy Byers. Heerensperger had a hand in it. I got them to agree to let me run a turbine for two years, as an experimental, trial deal. I got two years out of it. So, Jerry Barker invited me up to Seattle to meet with a guy named Jim Clapp, who was involved with the Space Needle and properties all over Seattle. He had the money to do it. He had a cabin cruiser with twin turbines in it, a smaller turbine.

We sat down at the Seattle Yacht Club and discussed it. He decided to go forward with me on the turbine. I showed him my plan, told him about the engine that I wanted to use, the gear box I wanted to use. I wanted to use Ron Jones to build the boat. He had a shop in California, Costa Mesa. Jim wound up writing me a check for \$30,000 to order the boat from Ron Jones. I took that \$30,000 check down to Ron Jones, gave it to him, got him to give me a deal, contract with Jim Clapp to build the boat.

I was living in Marina del Rey and my friend had a restaurant there in Marina del Rey with the offshore boats. He was the national champion in offshore racing. He got me a job down there because I needed to work—not racing anymore—selling boats in the marina. So, I started selling boats in the marina and working with Ron Jones on the hydro, the U-95. It wasn't the U-95 then, it was just a turbine boat...

Schumacher joined a team headed by Leslie Rosenberg in 1974 and drove the U-74 Valu-Mart.

"So, I went to work immediately and did a lot of research on turbines and came up with the turbine that we're running today, the Lycoming that we're running today. I found a guy in California that did gear boxes. I came up with the gear box they use, basically, some of them are using today."

Yeah.

...and Jim Clapp in Seattle. So, you know, I had a lot of experience racing with Chuck Lyford in outboards and in limiteds. I drove the 7-litre. Clapp called me one day when I was at work in Marina Del Rey selling boats, asked if it would be OK if he brought Chuck Lyford on board to help with the project. And I said absolutely. Chuck and I are good buddies, it'll be a big asset, he's a real smart man.

It went along where Chuck more and more started taking over the project because he was in Seattle with Jim Clapp and he was communicating with Ron Jones more than I was, which I didn't know about. He had come up with a different turbine program for Jim Clapp, with twin engines rather than mine. He came up with his own gear box program because he had to connect two turbines into it. He used different gear box people and he had his own turbine people in Seattle he was talking with.

So, my program had pretty much been changed entirely. I wasn't real happy about that. The next thing I know he calls and told me that I was asking too much to drive the boat. And I said, "Well, Chuck, did you forget this was my project?" And he said, "Well, it was, but it isn't anymore. It's mine. It's my project and you're asking too much to drive the boat, and I have a young man up here that has offered to drive it for free."

OK...

And I said, "For free. And who might that be?" And he said, "Leif Borgersen." And I said, "Oh, my God, I don't believe it." And I said, "Well, you know, take Leif Borgersen and your project and stick it where the sun doesn't shine." And I hung up. Never talked to him again for at least a couple years. So that's the way the U-95 got started.

Wow.

Very few people know that story, but that's how it started. And those that really can verify it are all dead. Ron Jones, Jr., might know about it but he and I aren't friends anymore and, uh, there's a reason



John Crouse

In 1975, the boat was renamed the U-74 Weisfield's.

for that. So, you know, it's documented in several places. The gear box people know about it and other people know about it. Jerry Barker's not alive anymore. Rick Keller's not alive anymore. Jones is not alive anymore. You know, it just goes on and on.

The turbine people Lyford used, they probably know about it. But anyway, they did it differently than I would have. Chuck put a stick in the boat initially, rather than a steering wheel. There were a lot of things that were done differently than I would have. I think I would have had a successful boat right off the start, because we had the turbine that is used today. It has the horsepower and the dependability and all that. The gear box was proven later, because that's who they went to later.

Yeah.

So that's my experience with a turbine boat. When Leslie [Rosenberg] asked me to drive his boat in Seattle, as a test drive. He had a guy named Ron Armstrong driving it and Ron wasn't doing too well. He qualified for Seattle at 111, I think it was. That was at Sand Point.

Yeah.

The boat was set up all wrong. I didn't like it. It was totally wrong. I don't

know how he even went as fast as he did. Well, I went faster, anyway, but it was capable of much better speed than what I went. He went 111, qualified the boat. I went 116 or -17, testing the boat. I got back—and he had driven it all year—that was my first time in it. We got back to Leslie in the pits and I said, "Les, you know, the boat has a lot more potential, but the seat is wrong, the foot pedals are wrong, the steering wheel is wrong. Other than that, it's a good boat."

He said, "Well, what is it gonna take to get you to race it?" And so, I told him the number and a couple other people that knew me from racing vouched for me that I was a really good driver and all that. Les knew about me and stuff so it wasn't that he questioned that, but when he announced that he wanted me to drive the boat from then on, Dave Heerensperger was really against it. Tried to get me outlawed from it because I left his team, the *Pay 'n Pak*, and didn't even tell him I was leaving. So, he was saying the rule book says if you don't have a race under your belt within so much time, you have to re-qualify as a driver. And this was at the race.

Well, he was wrong. I had driven within two years and so I was qualified to race, so his argument didn't stand up.

I wound up driving for Leslie, and as the *Valu-Mart*, we finally got it running really well at the end of the year at San Diego. I beat Chenoweth in one heat, and it had even more in it than I showed there. But it started to get nose light and I was not about to flip an Unlimited over backwards.

Yeah.

We put a fence on it to calm it down and it did calm it down. It also slowed it down, but it was still fast enough to win some races for us.

In '75 it won Miami. First race of the year.

Yeah, we did. I think I won another race that year, too. I think I won two races that year with it. It started to really, really go. I got to where I could really drive it well. Then we, Les and I—Weisfield's wasn't going to sponsor it anymore—so Les and I went to Olympia and talked them into sponsoring us.

Olympia Beer.

Yeah. Les and I drove down in the car and spent the whole afternoon with Mike Schmidt and came back with a sponsorship. It was fast that year [1976], too, with *Olympia*, but when I crashed it in Detroit. You know, it was built out of honeycomb. It was filled with water, so it



Billy Schumacher and team owner Leslie Rosenberg

was really heavy.

Yeah.

The sponson got rebuilt, made it heavier, too. So, it wasn't the same boat at all. But we did win the race in San Diego. That's a long story about how that happened because Bill Muncey had about 10 miles an hour on me, or more.

If there's anything that you think really stands out about that race...

Well, he wasn't the nice guy and I wasn't the nice guy. He knew he was way faster than me. I would've won the race

in Detroit that year, I'm convinced. In fact, I was leading when it crashed. I was blowing by Tommy D'Eath in the *U.S.* like he was goin' the other way, who actually won the Gold Cup that year. It was gonna be a cake walk 'cause the boat was really fast. It went up in the air and came down on that side and blew that sponson off. That's when it sank. I was lucky to live through that.

Yeah.

I have a big photograph that shows me leaning over from the debris from the sponson, and the sponson literally gone. If the runner hadn't bent up like a water ski it would've crashed in more, at faster speed and disintegrated the boat. I probably wouldn't be talking to you today. I was lucky, that was one of the times I was really lucky and not by my doing.

But, being as slow as it was after that accident, Muncey came up to me in San Diego, 1976, and said, "Look, we know, you know, I know you can't beat me with the boat that you're driving." I said, "All right, I know." He said, "Let's put on a race for the public, 'cause you and I are faster than everybody. Let's just put on a good race."

I said, "Great!" So, I did my flying start on the inside. He did his flying start on the outside. We got to the turn where he was a boat length ahead of me, not



Schumacher, on the left, drove the *Weisfield's* to victory at the 1975 Champion Spark Plug Regatta in Miami. On his inside in this photo is the *U-71 Atlas Van Lines* driven by Bill Muncey.



even a boat length, half-a-boat length ahead of me, and my lane disappeared.

Ah!

It knocked the wind out of me, broke the cowling, broke the windshield, the upholstery went over the side of that boat. It ripped that off. It was floppin' at me before it stopped. I got it started and was able to finish that heat.

There weren't very many boats in it, I think. I probably wound up fourth place, but it was enough points to get me into the final. I was so mad, but it was on *Wide World of Sports* and I didn't dare act up. So, I just found a bucket to sit on. (Laughter.) Tried to think of what I could do without being nasty in front of the television.

So, when the final heat came, I made my decision. When the final heat came, the five-minute gun went off, we're out on the racecourse. I used up all my nitrous before the race started, cutting in front of Muncy before the race started, throwing as much water on him as I could. And there's nothing in the rule book that says I couldn't do that. And I just drowned him. I probably put 200

gallons of water in his boat. It freaked him out so bad he jumped the gun by at least five seconds, which was a long ways.

That's not something Muncy usually did.

No. And needless to say, I won the race. Nobody else could catch me. He was a half-lap ahead, but it didn't matter. So, after I came in, he sat in his boat in the water with his head down like he does sometimes. Never got out of the boat for probably five minutes. Just sat there, probably disgusted with me and disgusted with himself.

He and I didn't talk for a couple years. I had retired from racing. In Seattle we were invited to the Seahawks game as guest hosts at half time. So, they announced us. And Muncy, you either loved him or you didn't. And a lot of people didn't because they called him a cry-baby in Seattle. I loved him, personally. I mean, he was one of the most talented boat racers I ever knew.

Oh, yeah.

In fact, the best I've ever known, uh, including myself. And he was one of the most talented musicians that I'd ever heard, and I thought he was extremely talented in everything he did. A lot of

people didn't know he could play a piano extremely well. He played a trumpet, the saxophone, and I think it was the flute. Extremely well, all of 'em. He played with Guy Lombardo a few times in the band. He and I used to play tennis together. He was extremely good at tennis.

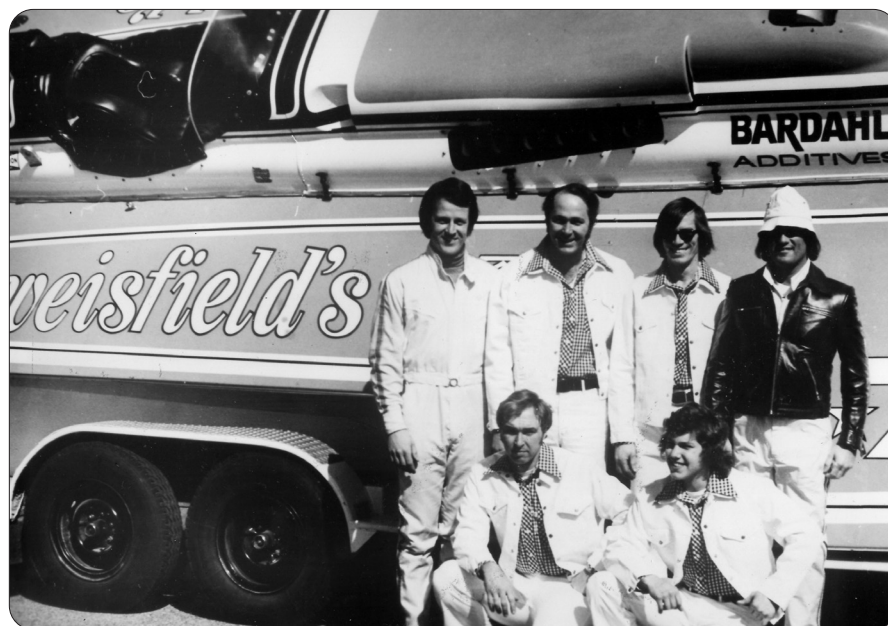
Yeah, he was.

We water skied together. He wasn't so good at that. I was. I had him there, too. I had him at water skiing and I shouldn't say, too. I only beat him a few times at boat racing, but for him not to talk to me for a couple of years was hard on both of us, I think. And then at Seattle [in 1977], his boat came apart. I was working with Wayne Cody at the time, broadcasting the race for KIRO. And his boat came apart and they weren't gonna run it in the final heat. The bottom was falling off of it. And he asked me if I'd race it for him in the final heat. I knew what was going on with his boat. I said, "Well, Bill, thank you very much but I think not."

This was with the Blue Blaster?

Yeah. Anyway, I believe that was the same year we were invited to the Seahawks game.

OK.



The 1975 Weisfield's team. Front row, from the left, Dave Culley and Mike Hanlon. Back row, from left, Billy Schumacher, Jerry Zuvich, Gary Crawford, and Leslie Rosenberg.



Rosenberg's boat as it appeared in 1976 while carrying the colors of the U-74 Olympia Beer.

We saw each other. We didn't talk much after that, after the invitation to drive his boat, the bottom falling off of it. I just said no thank you. Anyway, when we got to the football game—back in that year Western wear was really popular—my wife at the time dressed me in Western wear for this event. My belt buckle—and I still have it—it's round, about four inches one way and three the other and it had a donkey's ass on it. It was silver with a gold donkey's ass. I don't know why I thought that was funny, but I did. So, I wore that belt.

I'm standing there with him and we're not talking and he's just looking at my belt buckle. He looked back up at me and said, "Very appropriate." (Laughter.) In other words, I'm a donkey's ass. Anyway, then they announce us and believe it or not there were more boos than cheers when he was announced. There were hardly any boos when I was announced. That kind of rubbed him the wrong way, too. But we started talking again and became buddies again after that. It really shook me up when he was

killed in Mexico.

Oh, I'm sure, yeah.

We were good friends for a lot of years. And, you know, in the heat of competition things changed from time to time.

Yeah. Well, you retired after the 1976 season.

Yeah.

You may have tested Pete LaRock's boat the next year, in 1977.

He might've asked me to take a ride in it.

It was the former U-95. He had it.

As I recall it's an OK boat. I didn't see any immediate danger in driving it. I had no interest in racing it. I had retired and I was gonna stay that way. I asked him if he would give my co-driver for the Paris Grand Prix race, John Sanders, a chance to drive it. I told him how good Sanders was. I mean, Sanders was a factory driver for a reason. He agreed to that. I wanted to see Johnny get into Unlimited racing 'cause that's something he wanted to do. That was my chance at doing it.

But, you know, he didn't show him-

self as being great there. It was his first chance at an Unlimited and all that, and his career in racing didn't go much further, in Unlimited racing. I'm not sure that it wasn't that he decided he didn't want to do it any more after driving that boat. I don't know, 'cause John lived in Denver at the time and I wasn't near there. We saw each other skiing a couple of times, but that was the extent of it. I can't tell you what his interest was at the time in racing an Unlimited again. I don't know.

OK.

But that's, I think, probably other than the vintage boats, the only other one I drove, I believe. ❖

Next month, in the final installment of our interview with Billy Schumacher, he talks about his years as a boat owner, evaluates some current drivers who are active, and talks about the status of unlimited racing. Be sure to read part four in next month's Unlimited NewsJournal.

AROUND THE CIRCUIT

Race Site News by Chris Tracy



The February Unlimiteds Unanimous meeting had a surprise guest as Rob Graham stopped by and gave an update on his boats. His team's primary boat, the U-12, is being prepped for the 2020 season, he said. The crew is currently working on a small delaminated area that was found during the prep process. Meanwhile, the U-98 crew has been working to fix a troublesome alignment issue. While Graham jokingly said that he didn't want to give away any secrets, he did mention that his team will have nine complete engines ready to race when the season starts. Graham thanked the *Unlimited NewsJournal* staff for the work we do.

Jim Harvey was the guest speaker at the Royal Order of the Turbine (ROTT) meeting in February. Harvey was accompanied by his wife, Sue Weber-Troxell, who is the mother of driver Jeff Bernard. ROTT meets twice a year: in Eastern Washington on the Saturday night before the HAPO Columbia Cup for dinner and an auction that benefits the Hydroplane and Raceboat Museum, and in the Seattle area in February for pizza and to listen to a guest speaker.

Here are some highlights from Harvey's talk:

He traced his involvement in hydro racing, beginning in 1952 when living with his family in Medina, Wash., where he watched Unlimited qualifications. Mira Slovak lived three doors down from his family's house. As he grew older there were more hydro connections, including when his sister dated boat builder Dave Nolan in the mid-1960s and Nolan built him a model hydro.

In the 1960s, Harvey wanted to work on an Unlimited and visited shops, but no one let him in. In 1966 he went to

Bob Gilliam's shop and a crew member asked him to hand him some equipment and then help him hold something in place on the boat. And, so, he became a crew member. He recalled that his first race on the road was a race in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho. He had no money, slept on the floor of the motel, and recalled putting ketchup in hot water at a restaurant to make himself free tomato soup. Gilliam learned of his plight and gave him a few dollars.

After serving in the military for two years, Harvey returned to the Unlimiteds in 1970, shortly before the San Diego race. He was told to shave his beard if he wanted to work on the crew. Part of his job was to deliver equipment to California, but his truck lost its brakes in Grants Pass, Oregon. He worked with Jim McCormick's *Timex* team and confirmed that most believe McCormick likely burned a former *Hallmark Homes* for insurance money. He talked about working for the *Notre Dame* team and described the owner as hard to work for. When the *Notre Dame* equipment was sold to Bernie Little, he went with the boat.

Harvey left the sport in 1975 as he and his wife wanted to start a family. He was still active in limited racing and spoke highly of their limited driver, Steve Reynolds. Bill Bennett (Circus Circus) called him halfway through the 1978 season, which led to him working for Bennett to build a boat, shop, and 20 Merlin engines, all in about six months.

Harvey talked about buying Merlins, sometimes from scrap dealers. There were tons of them stacked at the scrap dealers and they'd pick the engines they wanted before they were melted down.

Harvey talked about the engine programs he worked on in the 1980s,

like helping the *Atlas* team turn around with a better water injection process. Harvey was Bill Muncey's hotel roommate in Acapulco when Muncey lost his life in the racing accident. It was an unusual racecourse, as crewmembers had to push the boats out because the water was so shallow near the pits. The racecourse was quite shallow, period.

Harvey noted that Muncey wore prescription sunglasses that were blown off his face in the previous heat before the final and he raced the final heat without them. After the accident, Harvey helped put the boat back together in 100 days and was asked by Fran Muncey to be the team's crew chief.

In the 1980s, Harvey became the owner of a former *Squire Shop*. To make the ownership deal come together,



Lon Erickson



Jim Harvey's U-2 Miss T-Plus during its appearance in Detroit in 1992.

he signed a long-term sponsorship agreement with Oberto and got title to the boat on the same day. The boat looked great.

When they went back east, they loaded six motors and filled the truck with everything that they could, including full nitrous bottles and full fuel drums. Unfortunately, they had a friction tire fire in Alabama and they entire truck burned and exploded. The fire burned over seven acres! While Harvey always wanted his boat to make the national news, he did not realize that the fire would be the ticket.

He thanked the *Bud* crew and Fran Muncey for helping him rebuild after the fire. The *Bud* team lent him tools and equipment and Muncey sold him a couple of complete engines and gearboxes at rock-bottom prices. Harvey noted that his team won their first race for Oberto.

In 1990, Harvey realized that turbines were the future for hydroplane power plants. He bought a dozen turbines for \$7,200 each but did not know anything about turbines. He first thought they'd run Merlins at salt-water venues and turbines in fresh water, but soon found that was too complicated with parts all over the place, so quickly decided to only run turbines.

The *T-Plus* era was a five-year

commitment. T-Plus wanted to enhance its brand name and then the owner planned to sell the company. Harvey also picked up Bruce McCaw as a partner. He noted that in 1993, when turbine engines were not restricted, they spent \$195,000 in replacement parts. The next

year, when restrictions on turbines were implemented, they spent \$27,000 on replacement parts.

And that famous Honolulu win in record speed with Steve David driving, they put a new wheel on the turbine engine for the final; it was junk after the record run. And, as they thought, T-Plus sold to Quaker State and the product was taken off the market, as it was a competitor with Quaker.

In his later years as an owner, Harvey talked—with pride—about a driver he hired: J. Michael Kelly. Tom Anderson told him, “You need to meet this kid.” After he talked with Kelly for 30 minutes, Harvey hired him.

For more details about Jim Harvey's career, Fred Farley wrote a piece about him that is on the Hydroplane and Raceboat Museum website. You can find it at <http://thunderboats.ning.com/page/the-saga-of-jim-harvey>. ♦

H1 Unlimited names an operations manager.

The Board of Directors of the American Boat Racing Association, the official name of what is commonly called H1 Unlimited, has announced the hiring of Jan Shaw to be the organization's operations director for the 2020 season. Shaw currently chairs the Kenmore Slough Race for Seattle Outboard Association, is a past regional chair and serves on the board of the American Power Boat Association (APBA), and is an H1 scorer and timer.

During her career in boat racing, Shaw has gained extensive experience about the sport, such as sanctions, contracts, and the effort to monetize boat racing. In her work with H1, she has already created a marketing plan, reviewed sanctions, and has provided the H1 board with job descriptions for the various staff members involved within the inner workings of the sport. Shaw also is working with the APBA to revise the membership agreement.

According to a press release announcing her appointment, Shaw will help H1 achieve its mission statement, which says: “To maintain, improve and expand the sport of unlimited hydroplane racing, while ever mindful of enhancing the fan experience.”



HYDROFILE

Race Team News by Lon Erickson



U-1 HomeStreet Racing/Miss Madison

Crew chief Mike Hanson has been busy at the shop in Tukwila, Wash., fabricating new uprights and testing equipment for 2020.



Owen Blauman



Owen Blauman

Spirit of Detroit Racing

The U-7 *Spirit of Detroit* is receiving some major upgrades and overall weight reduction at Henderson Hydroplanes in Brockville, Ontario. Bodywork is 99 percent finished. The boat has new carbon fiber deck hatches and new decks, and its leading edge (bullnose) has been modified. The hull will be returning to the Bartush shop in Detroit soon for the balance of the off-season work.



Henderson Hydroplanes



Henderson Hydroplanes



Henderson Hydroplanes

U-12 Graham Trucking Racing

Rob Graham reports that his team's primary boat, the U-12 (below), is being prepped for the 2020 season. That has involved the usual winter repairs from the prior season's racing. The U-98 crew has worked on some alignment issues that they inherited when the former Leland Racing hull was purchased last year (bottom). Graham feels they are in the best shape with their engine program going into the 2020 season.



Lon Erickson



Lon Erickson

Go Fast Turn Left Racing

With the sale of the U-21 to the Stocklins, the O'Farrell family's Go Fast Turn Left team is a one-hull team with their newest hull (below), which debuted in 2019. And past driver Brian Perkins is sitting the season out. The obvious question is, "What is the status of GFTL heading into 2020?" The team posts on its Facebook page: "...we're still discussing options for this season. We'll post as soon as we have solid plans."



Lon Erickson

Bucket List Racing

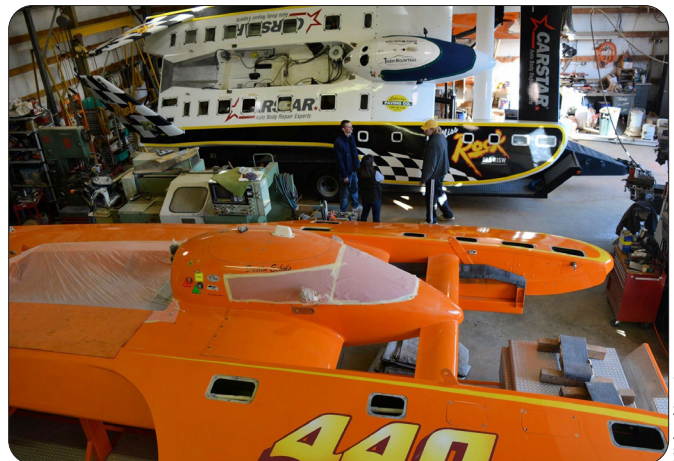
By far the biggest development of the off-season is the acquisition of the former U-21 (Hull #0721) by Kelly and Sharon Stocklin and their Bucket List Racing team. The O'Farrell's Go Fast Turn Left backup hull competed through the 2018 season. The Stocklins added it to their team, which includes the 440 *Bucket List* hull that they have raced since 2012. Along with the former U-21 hull, they also have added the sponsorship of KISW Radio and CARSTAR to the team. We will be following this developing story as the team continues to formulate their plan for 2020 with regards to both hulls and driver duties. The team has recently completed upgrades and work on the 440 hull to repair damage it suffered at Tri-Cities that ended its 2019 season.



Michael Lemier



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MY \$0.02 WORTH

Editorial Comment by Andy Muntz



Let's recall what happened in Seattle last summer. Jimmy Shane and the *Miss HomeStreet* crossed the finish line as apparent victors, a celebration was held before the TV cameras and a cheering crowd in the pits, Shane was presented with a watch and a trophy, confetti was shot into the air, champagne was sprayed about, and the fans went home thinking they had seen the blue boat win.

But by the time those fans arrived home, the situation had changed. Shane had gone too slow before the start, the officials announced, and J. Michael Kelly was instead declared the winner. For the third year in a row, the boat crossing the finish line first in the final heat turned out not to win Seattle's race.

There was widespread embarrassment within H1 Unlimited. The culprit, it was determined, was the way the minimum speed rule was enforced. So, the rule was eliminated at the season's next stop in San Diego and much of the following couple of months was spent trying to find a better way to start a race.

The solution was reported in last month's issue of the *NewsJournal*. The minimum speed rule will remain next year, but a new system will be installed in the boats to keep better track of their speeds. A recording of those speeds will then be reviewed by officials immediately after a heat has ended to determine whether any violations occurred. The review will happen quickly, we've been assured, so that the official winner can be declared as soon as possible after the boats have returned to the pits.

A more concrete way to enforce the minimum speed rule is a great improvement; the flashing strobe lights simply didn't work. There weren't enough of them to go around, they were unreliable, and they were hard for officials to see. The result was a rule that was inconsistently enforced. Drivers knew that they could drop below the 80-mph minimum and would often not be called for it.

The new system eliminates the uncertainty. Every driver will know that there is a gizmo aboard their boat that is recording their every move and that if their speed drops below that minimum, they're not going to get away with it. If there is a violation for breaking that rule, therefore, the blame will be squarely on them. So, the hope is, they won't take that chance.

But, while the starting procedure played a big factor in the embarrassment at Seattle last summer, it wasn't the only cause. Perhaps the bigger sin was the declaration of a winner before the winner was truly known.

Under the new system, there still remains a chance that the boat crossing the finish line first will not be the winner. It will remain uncertain that the guy pumping his fist in the air as his boat drifts to the dock and who the reporters will want to interview as soon as he hops off the boat's deck will turn out not to even be on the awards stand a half hour later.

So, the new system is a great start. Now, for the sake of the fans, let's hope H1 officials can devise a way to eliminate the chance of that other humiliation. ♦

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Letters may be edited for clarity and space.

PLEASE JOIN US AT THE NEXT MEETING OF UNLIMITEDS UNANIMOUS.

2 p.m. on Sunday, March 8, 2020

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