

JANUARY 2021

**FROM THE UNJ VAULT:**

## Roy Duby: The innovative 200-miles-per-hour man.

Roy Duby was a superb mechanic who gained a reputation as an innovator. He also had a lengthy career as an Unlimited driver, having seen action in more than a dozen different hulls from 1951 to 1967. He is best known, however, as the 200-miles-per-hour man, a title that he earned in April 1962 when he became the first person to drive an Unlimited hydroplane through a measured mile at greater than 200 mph. His achievement at the wheel of the *Miss U.S. 1* stood as the world straightaway speed record for nearly 38 years.

Duby was born in Minneapolis in 1911 to parents of Norwegian heritage and, after living in Canada for a few years, they settled in Detroit in 1924. He



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became interested in competition while still a youngster and recalled watching Gar Wood race on the Detroit River. He called the Motor City his home until the mid-1960s, when he and his wife, Opal, moved to the Florida Keys. He passed away there at Key Largo, Florida, on March 4, 1999, at the age of 87.

The following interview was conducted by Bill Osborne and Craig Fjarlie during an event at Miami Marine Stadium and was originally published in the July and August 1976 issues of the *Unlimited NewsJournal*.

**UNJ: How did you get your start?**

Duby: It was through Danny Foster. We'd known each other for years racing midget cars. In 1950, we were doing boat installations. We built several race boats. Then, the next year, when Dan Arena and Jack Schafer split, I took over the boat Arena had driven. Foster was driving Schafer's other boat.

**So, your first ride was in Gold'n Crust in 1951. That boat was powered by a Rolls-Royce Merlin. How did your engine setup compare with the Rolls of today?**

Both of Schafer's boats that year had Merlins. Of course, we didn't have as good engines as they have now. The Korean War was going on, so all of the Dash-9 models were called back into service. The engines we had were weaker. They were the early models. We had a Rolls 68, which was the first two-stage,

two-speed blower engine. It resembled the engines they're using today, but it wasn't as husky inside.

**Dan Arena built Gold'n Crust. What was your opinion of the design?**

Well, he had a good design, I believe. After all, it was his design that I ran the mile record with.

**The Gold'n Crust was never noted for being an exceptionally good boat. Do you know what he was trying to do with the design?**

The non-trip on the side of the hull was a really deep angle from the time it left the sponson to the transom. It had a real narrow-gauge transom, more like the limited boats. And it had a lot of crown on the deck.

**The next boat you were involved with was the U-111 Such Crust III in 1952. You helped with the actual con-**

**struction, didn't you?**

Yes, I did. I was in on the final construction before the deck was installed. I helped put in the under-deck fixtures like the gas tanks. It was finished in February or March—it was still winter—and they brought it down here to Miami. Al Fallon had his *Miss Great Lakes II*, and they ran an exhibition. I think it was over at Baker's Hollow where we once ran the limiteds. This is where the *Crust* first got wet.

**There are conflicting reports over who designed the hull. Who did design it?**

Les Staudacher. It was built in Kawkawlin, Michigan. It was Jack Schafer's idea. I guess he'd been watching the two-engined *Miss Pepsi* that ran so well and he came up with the idea. It was the first twin-engined three-pointer.



Hydroplane and Raceboat Museum

Roy Duby's first ride in an Unlimited came aboard Jack Schafer's *Gold'n Crust* in 1951. He's shown here at the Gold Cup in Seattle.



**What problems did you encounter with the two-engine concept?**

Well, they had a very complicated gearbox and they used to have continual gearbox failures. The gearbox was similar in design to the *Pepsi*'s. The only thing is that the *Pepsi* ran with the prop in the water, but the three-pointer, with the erratic prop and shaft setup, had a lot of over-speed and cavitation. The gearbox wasn't heavy enough to take that. But even the *Pepsi* had gear troubles.

**You had a serious accident in that boat. When did it happen and how seriously were you injured?**

It happened in Detroit. We were tuning up and testing several days prior to the Silver Cup. I broke my neck, dislocated both shoulders, and broke every rib in my rib cage. And I tore ligaments in one leg. I was in traction for about six weeks before they pronounced me ready for a cast. The full-body cast stayed on six more weeks. Then I went into a brace. I was out of circulation for a year with that one. I didn't get back into any Unlimited until 1954, although I did drive several limited in 1953.

**Prior to the accident, you drove the G-7 *Such Crust IV* in the 1952 Maple Leaf.**

Yeah, that was the boat Bill Cantrell drove. We were going to share driving chores because we were competing against *Pepsi*. She was an exceptionally good starter with Chuck Thompson driving, and if he got out in front you had to follow his wash. Going into those turns, you really worked yourself to pieces. Cantrell drove the first heat; I was to drive the second. We had a special Allison engine, a G-3. We got it from Horace Dodge. It was single-stage, two-speed, similar to the Rolls-Royce, which had two stages and speeds. This Allison had a gear change where you could put it in a higher blower ratio.

Bill said, "Put it in high and beat that *Pepsi* across the line." But Thompson was a pretty sharp starter. I don't know if it was intentional, but he always milled around the starting line until the



Hydroplane and Raceboat Museum



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L.B. Meldrum

**TOP:** Roy Duby in the cockpit of *Gold'n Crust* in 1951. **MIDDLE:** Duby tested the twin-engined *Such Crust III* in Detroit. **ABOVE:** He drove the new *Such Crust IV* at the 1952 Maple Leaf Trophy.

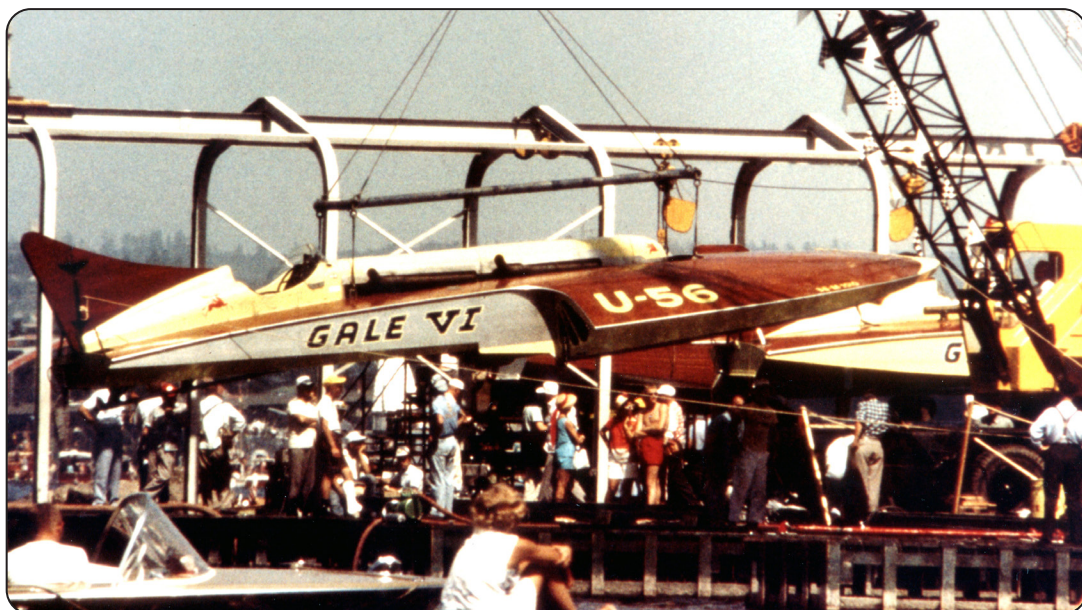




Hydroplane and Raceboat Museum

**ABOVE:** Duby drove the *Gale VI* through most of the 1956 season and also in 1958. **RIGHT:** The *Gale VI* on the hook at the 1958 Gold Cup in Seattle.

**"When Lombardo retired in the fall of 1955, I joined with the Schoeniths. I stayed with them through the end of 1958. In '56 they had three boats going: the old *Gale IV*, the new *Gale V*, and the twin-Allison *Gale VI*."**



Tony Bugeja Collection

one-minute gun and he'd go back and make a start. He didn't have too much of a run like the three-pointers. He could accelerate in a short distance. And he's laying up some swells so large you thought you were in the Atlantic.

I hit one of those lumps, the boat jumped out of the water, the engine over-spiced and back-fired, and it blew the carburetor right off. Shrapnel from the supercharger was flying and punched small holes in the boat. It looked like bullet holes throughout the hull. We were through for the day.

**In 1954, you drove *Trot-A-Long* in the Silver Cup. This was when Jack Schafer had tax problems and another party stepped in to race Schafer's boats.**

The boats had been laid up and were dried out completely. All the fastenings that held the strut and rudder were loose—the wood had shrunk so badly. The nuts and bolts were pretty loose on the transom. When Chuck Thompson was practicing in *Pace-A-Long*, another Schafer boat, the bottom of the boat split open and they lost the strut, shaft, and rudder. It started sinking and he beached it near Belle Isle on the Detroit River.

I competed in *Trot-A-Long* two heats. When I came in from the second, I had a lot of vibration. This could have been due to the boat drying out and all the fastenings being loose. I started up for the final heat and the hull was taking water so badly I pulled off the course. Before I returned the



boat sank, so we were again through for the day.

### Did you do any driving in 1955?

No. 1955 is when Guy Lombardo returned to boat racing. The family didn't want Guy to drive, so he asked Danny Foster. Now, Danny and I had a shop together. So, Danny drove the boat and I was chief mechanic. We campaigned for the season. I did test it though. We were the first to work out this fuel additive thing like running alcohol-base fuel. We didn't run 100 percent alcohol, but we were the first ones to ever use it. I maintain that's the reason Foster was running such good laps back in those days. We had a very successful season.

### What kind of a person was Lombardo to work for?

Guy Lombardo was a prince of a fellow. You didn't even know he was around. He stayed back and chatted very little with us, because we were doing the work so satisfactorily, as far as he was concerned, that he was all smiles most of the time.

### Then, in 1956, you drove Gale IV.

When Lombardo retired in the fall of 1955, I joined with the Schoeniths. I stayed with them through the end of



Hydroplane and Raceboat Museum

Duby drove the Gale V at the 1957 Gold Cup.

1958. In '56 they had three boats going: the old Gale IV, the new Gale V, and the twin-Allison Gale VI.

### How do you remember the Gold Cup race that year?

That was quite controversial. Between the Pepsi and Miss Thriftway.

### Did Bill Muncy hit the buoy in the final heat?

I don't really know. I think they both, Muncy and Chuck Thompson, were equally at fault. If there was any disqualification, I think they were prime

suspects. Muncy had dislodged the buoy and Pepsi ran completely over it. But I don't know, I didn't see it. I think the referee didn't see it. He was just taking the word of the course judges.

I'll tell you, it was so cloudy and so rough, who knows? But that buoy may have broken loose and shifted. It was a miserable day. Rough and rainy. It wasn't ideal for racing at all. But that was the final heat and they wanted to get it over with, so everyone elected to go ahead and run it.

### What were your impressions of the Gale IV?

The Gale IV was a good riding hull. It had a little different engine setup. It had an old Volker gearbox and we had to run a right-hand prop. The box had to have several gears in combination to reverse rotation so the prop would be turning right-hand like the two-gear boxes.

### You drove Guy Lombardo's Tempo VII at the Sahara Cup on Lake Mead that year.

Guy was playing at a club there. I think he wanted to put on a publicity thing. I don't remember the club, but they might have induced him to bring the boat out and paid expenses. That was the only reason it raced. The boat took on a lot of water before the final heat. They put all the boats in and then someone couldn't get started. I think it was

## ROY DUBY'S DRIVING STATS

YEAR	BOAT	RACE RESULTS				HEAT RESULTS					
		RACES	1st	2nd	3rd	START	FINISH	1st	Pct.	Top 3	Pct.
1951	Gold'n Crust	2	0	1	0	3	3	0	0.000	3	1.000
1952	Such Crust IV	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0.000	0	0.000
1954	Trot-A-Long	1	0	0	0	3	2	1	0.500	1	0.500
1956	Gale IV	6	0	2	0	11	8	3	0.375	7	0.875
	Gale VI	1	0	0	0	3	2	0	0.000	1	0.500
	Tempo VII	1	0	0	0	2	2	0	0.000	2	1.000
1957	Gale V	1	0	0	0	3	3	0	0.000	2	0.667
1958	Gale VI	2	0	0	0	6	4	1	0.250	4	1.000
1960	Miss U.S. I	2	0	0	0	2	1	1	1.000	1	1.000
1961	Miss U.S. I	1	0	0	1	3	3	1	0.333	3	1.000
1963	Miss U.S. I	1	0	0	0	2	0	0	0.000	0	0.000
	Gale V	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.000	0	0.000
	Mariner Too	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.000	0	0.000
1965	Miss U.S. 5	4	0	0	1	13	12	2	0.167	8	0.667
1966	Mariner Too	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.000	0	0.000
	Smirnoff	1	0	0	0	3	2	1	0.500	2	1.000
1967	Smirnoff	1	0	0	0	2	1	0	0.000	1	1.000
	Miss Budweiser	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0.000	0	0.000
TOTALS		29	0	3	2	58	43	10	0.233	35	0.814



**TOP:** Roy Duby (left) with boat builder and designer Les Staudacher, the creator of the *Miss U.S. 1*. **MIDDLE:** The team prepares the boat for its world record attempt at Lake Guntersville, Alabama. **ABOVE:** Duby and *Miss U.S. 1* during the record run in 1962.

Norm Evans in *Miss Seattle*, so everyone waited for him. By the time the heat began, *Tempo* was so full of water I couldn't get any boat speed.

**Skipping ahead, in 1958 you drove the twin-Allison *Gale VI* at Seattle's Gold Cup race, when Muncey lost the rudder and struck the Coast Guard boat.**

I was charging in that corner at a pretty good rate of speed, but the boat, being heavy, wouldn't hang on the turning buoys. I had the presence of mind to look back and see if someone might be trying to sneak between the buoys and myself. I looked up and saw Muncey, and he didn't look like he could ever make that turn. What he was trying to do was beat the pack into the turn because he was aiming right for them and had no steering. He brushed right across my bow and then his boat, *Thriftyway*, went into the cutter.

**What did you think of that particular *Gale VI*?**

They made so many changes that they didn't know which way to go. They were really confused. Everyone had different ideas of where the rudder should be, where the prop should be, how long the sponsons should be. They kept making changes, so many that they lost all perspective on the boat. It was a very erratic-handling boat. It had lots of straightaway speed, but you couldn't turn it. When the water got real rough and choppy, it just got plain miserable to drive. You just couldn't use maximum power at all.

**How did you become associated with George Simon and the *Miss U.S.* team?**

That was the winter of '59. I'd left the Gale organization. I was building myself a home and shop in the suburbs of Detroit. I happened to drop by Simon's office one day. He asked me what I was doing, and I said nothing. He said, "Well, maybe you'd like to come to work for us?" I said, "Well maybe I just might do that." They were looking for someone with Rolls-Royce experience.



**For the 1960 season, George Simon wanted to enter the Harmsworth against *Supertest*, so he switched back to an Allison. What was involved in that changeover?**

We knew the Allison wouldn't be good enough to compete with Gordon Thompson's *Miss Supertest III* with the Rolls Griffon, so we got a hold of a turbine blower used in World War II, mostly in the radial-engined B-24. And we started to experiment. This was sort of the forerunner to the exhaust-turbine blower like they're using today. However, we didn't have time to work it out. We destroyed two engines in the attempt.

**You had a very close call while testing *Miss U.S. I* in the early '60s in Detroit.**

Yes, I was out testing on the Detroit River. On the Belle Isle side, opposite the pits. At about 165 miles per hour, the rudder came off. I got the boat all shut off, the fuel secured, the mixture control off. The *U.S.* was heading for a big piling protecting the docks from ice. Heading right for it. I said, "Boy this is not for me." I attempted to get out once and the wind blew me back against the seat, so I grabbed my knees and rolled out. The wind caught me and sucked me right out of the boat. I rolled and landed up against the docks. At the same time, I was listening—wondering what had happened to the *U.S.*

Well, when I jumped out, the boat veered and cut through where the big cruisers come out. There were only two wells open. They were directly across from each other, separated by a finger pier. The *U.S.* went into the first well and its sponson clipped a guide pole and pulled it down. The pole skipped over several cruisers, like a pin sliding on a bowling alley, landing against a big cruiser and laid it way over. The *U.S.* must have gotten elevated and it leaped right over the finger pier and into the only other vacant well. The port side of the transom hit the bow of a cruiser. The *U.S.* went on a little further and landed in a little pond. The rudder and rudder bracket had torn right off the boat. I came out of it just badly bruised. I didn't break any bones. But that's the fastest I ever skipped across the water.

**So, next came the mile trial.**

Yeah, well during 1961, the boat had such straightaway speed in competition that George Simon was toying with the idea of a mile run. First, Simon wanted to make sure that we had the potential, so we tested on the Detroit River. But

**"The only time I got scared was on that return run when I couldn't see where I was going. What scared me the most was a large navigational buoy right in the middle of the course. ... I knew this big, black marker was out there somewhere and I couldn't see it."**

I never could get a long enough run. About the time I got running free, we'd wind up in Lake St. Clair in the rough freighter lanes. So, we decided to go to Madison on the Ohio River. Down there is where I knew the boat was capable of going over 200 miles per hour. But the Ohio River didn't seem practical—there was only about two miles of actual straightaway.

**There were some romanticized stories about how you took the boat on its trailer after the '61 season and drove around the country looking for a site. Is that the way it really happened?**

Not really. I had just gone around in my passenger car. I was looking for a large body of water that was flat. I wanted something that was like a mirror because at that speed you didn't want any ripple of any kind. I was also looking for protection from the wind, like in a mountainous or hilly area. This is how I came upon Guntersville. It looked like it had just enough area to get the job done. I'd heard so much about Guntersville, Alabama, about their nice level, quiet, and peaceful water. I was very elated with the area.

**How did you set up the boat for the mile run?**

First the engine. I had perfected a fuel-injection system for the Rolls, which is what they're running today. This gave me a lot more potential in horsepower. Other than that, all we did to the boat itself was just beef up some of the sections inside—the strut, rudder bracketing. We were concerned with the rudder coming off. We realized we'd better have a cowlings because of the high wind pressure, which could blow the spark plug wires, small instruments, and accessories off. Other than changing to a larger propeller—that's about all we did.

**What did you use for a gearbox ratio?**

We had planned to use a 3.05:1, the same thing they use today on a three-mile course. We were testing one time and the officials said it was clear for a run. But they missed seeing a boat out there. The boat driver heard me starting up out of Guntersville three miles back and got excited. He thought he'd better get off the course and he kicked up a great wake with that cruiser. I didn't know it was there. I hit it at about 180. The boat flew for a quarter of a mile. When it landed, the impact ripped half the teeth off the gearbox, and that was the only gearbox we thought was in good enough shape to run a mile.

We had nothing ready. So, we called Joe Mas-



Duby drove the third *Gale V* at the 1963 Seafair Trophy Race.

cari, who owned *Hawaii Ka'i III*. He had a gearbox with a 2.97:1 gear, and we thought, "Oh, my golly, that's gonna be too low." However, we didn't have any choice. It was an ideal gear. Fact is, we didn't need the gear we started out with.

#### **How many attempts did you actually make at the record?**

Well, we planned to run the trap with electric-eye timing, which was on posts 175 feet from shore. Well, that didn't work out too well. I had about four and a half miles each way in which to get started, set up, slow down, turn around, and start the other way. In trying to find this trap, and running so close to shore, I couldn't see that first marker. They had no balloons or buoys or anything. We had a terrible time. After 180 miles per hour, your visibility was nil.

Well, finally the Jaycees decided they'd get a group of little row boats and anchor them out there to sort of "funnel" me into the trap. So, I tried that. I was winding my way through these little boats and I'd see the speedometer get up around 180 or 190 as I'd start the trap. But I'd be so close to shore, and the boat torqued—it ran sort of dogleg fashion—and I had a terrific time keeping off the beach. On my second try, coming back I almost ran over a finger pier. George Simon says, "That's it. That ends it. That's just too risky." So, they decided they would use transits and a scanner system.

#### **When you actually set the record,**

**wasn't there some problem with the timing device? Didn't someone step on a cable and you ended up making an extra run?**

Yes, I made three runs through the trap. Not complete runs. Two one way, and one the other. I started out at Guntersville, which started me up through the approach to the traps. That was going upstream, you might say, because the Tennessee River came through in that area. So, going upstream, I had a 204.5 in the kilo and a 204.5 in the mile.

That was fine. I was getting a little braver all the time, so I went down to the end of the run. I thought I'd better try to enter this thing a little faster. I still had plenty under the pedal.

Well, when I got back to Guntersville after that run, I found out that someone—spectators—had stepped on the timing wiring and it had broken loose. The mile didn't "take," but the kilo did. I did 217-plus through the kilo on the return run.

The committee felt this problem was their fault, and that I was entitled to another return run if I wanted to take it, but I'd have to establish a new kilo. My first return run would be scratched. I knew there was no problem going over 200, so I said, "I'll take that run over."

Well, the people thought the run was over and the whole area swarmed with boats. They went around in a helicopter and tried to get everybody off the

course. By the time I refueled and back on the water, it had started to rain and sleet, but I knew I had to make that run that day because there was no extension on the sanction. So, I started out in the rain from Guntersville. When I turned around at the head of the lake, it had turned from sleet to fog. I had hardly any land visibility at all. And I'm going about 15 miles per hour with just a little image of trees on shore.

Finally, all of a sudden, I saw some light profile of some boat wells. I said, "Well, if I remember correctly, that's just about the start of the mile. I'm going to have to get going." So, I just put my foot in it—buried my foot in the accelerator, saying, "Hang on, here goes." I just ran blind, didn't see anything for about three miles.

Doing so, I ran a diagonal course. Running blind, I must've gone about a mile and an eighth in distance. My overall time was down. I think my return run was 198.2 in the mile and a 195 kilo. Well, we averaged 200.419 in the kilo.

On the return, this was the most power I'd ever used, so my propeller started to swell out of shape, and the boat went into a bad vibration. I was very concerned that the whole back of the boat would come off.

#### **Did you feel any fear or apprehension during the actual run?**

The only time I got scared was on that return run when I couldn't see where I was going. What scared me the most was a large navigational buoy right in the middle of the course. It was off the course where I would run had I had vision, but the Coast Guard wouldn't take it out. I knew this big, black marker was out there somewhere and I couldn't see it. I had visions of running smack into it. That scared me. But I was going too fast to really do anything about it, so I just hung on until I thought I was through the traps. By that time Guntersville came into view.

#### **What kind of engine rpms did you see during the run?**



I never did run out of rpms. During the mile, the fastest I ever turned the engine was 4,050. I had run harder than that in tests.

**All attempts to break your record have failed. Do you have an idea why?**

I think what happens is they think they have to use a higher gear ratio and a larger propeller than I was running. Doing that, their equipment couldn't live.

**Do you think the current hull designs are capable of those speeds?**

I believe so. Of course, the modern race boat is based on acceleration. I set the record with what they call high-flying, high-crown boats. They were very unsafe. We could never negotiate the corners. They jumped and hopped so much. We had to make all of our time on the straightaway.

**What did you learn in regard to competition from that mile run?**

Well, we tried to continue the special fuel-injection system we had, but found it wasn't active enough—alert enough—for competition. In competition, power and rpms fluctuate so rapidly that this concept just wasn't practical. It needed a lot of work. We decided to run the conventional setup carburetor and gasoline.

**You drove the *Miss U.S. I* in competition in the 1963 Gold Cup in Detroit.**

Well, *U.S. I* was a very erratic boat. It was a fast boat, but it handled miserably in rough water. After our record run, the boat started to get some age on it. We made a lot of changes in the boat. Whether this was right or wrong, we did this because we were trying to find something to make

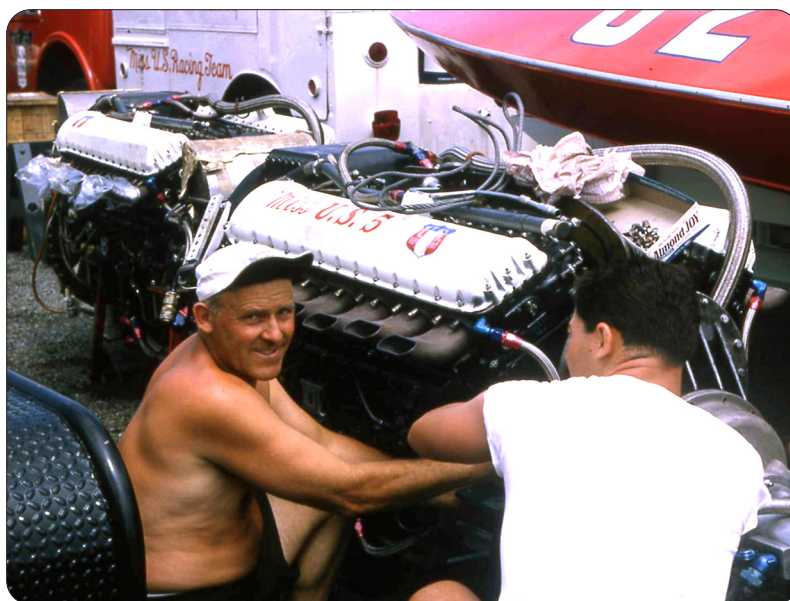
the boat handle better. We would incorporate all the findings in a new boat. So, we made a very radical change, but we weren't too happy with it. For a backup, George Simon got *Hawaii Ka'i III* out of retirement and made a *U.S.* out of it for one race. I was to drive the *U.S. I* that I set the record in and Donnie Wilson, the regular competition driver, was to run the other boat, *Miss U.S. V*.

**1966 was the year of the Dubinhauser engine, which you developed. In layman's terms, will you describe your engine as used on the *Smirnoff*?**

Well, I had been kicking that idea around for—oh, maybe five, six, or seven years before that. I had been secretly building the components of that engine for years. What it boiled down to

**BELOW:** Roy Duby (left) and Gene Arena work on one of the engines for the second *Miss U.S. 5*, a boat that first entered competition in 1964.

**BOTTOM:** Duby drove the second *Miss U.S. 5* during the 1965 season.



Tony Bugeja Collection



Eileen Crimmin

was a mixture between the Rolls-Royce and the Allison, taking what I thought were the best parts of each. It was an Allison-engine crankcase and cylinder blocks—or what they call a short-block in automotive terms—coupled to a complete Rolls-Royce accessory housing, supercharger, and after-cooler induction system.

**Did you encounter any problems in the setup?**

Well, I was trying to induce too much manifold pressure to the engine. The fact that the engine develops a monstrous amount of horsepower doesn't mean its power that comes out of the propeller. It took so much horsepower that the engine just couldn't stand that much load. Finally, we licked it by making a complete crankshaft change in the engine. It might've been a good setup if they'd wanted to continue with it. But it was a very costly thing.

**Are the parts still around?**

There's one engine together yet, and it's in Madison, Indiana. Graham Heath is just keeping it for a museum piece.

**Of all the boats you drove, do you have any favorites?**

No, not really. Most of the boats in that era were all the same vintage. They were high-flying, kiting jobs. And none of them were really comfortable when you got up to speed. It's only been since the time I got out that they got to building these boats that don't hop around and are a lot easier to drive.

I always admired a couple of boats, and I was asked to drive the *Slo-mo-shun* the year I got hurt so badly. Stan Sayres wanted me on a technical basis first, because he knew I had a lot of Rolls experience and they'd converted over to Rolls with the *Slo-mo-shun V*. The *IV* might have been a boat I'd like to have driven. I could plainly see why it established the propeller-driven record with ease.

**What do you see for the future of the sport?**

I don't like to say things like this, because it's on record, but the sport will di-



The 1966 *Smirnoff* at San Diego with one of Roy Duby's Dubinhaus engines.

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minish if they don't get more equipment in it. Every year there's less equipment to work with. The same old World War II engines. Even if there was equipment, there's not enough boats. It isn't a good, competitive situation. I don't look forward to seeing it.

**Do you think there are any other types of engines that could be used?**

Not unless they change the class of hull. They'd have to go smaller. Perhaps if Chryslers competed against themselves it would be different, but to compete the Chrysler against the aircraft engine is almost useless. The Chrysler is right on the ragged edge.

**Do you see any future for the turbine engines?**

Yes, providing that you could get the engines. Most of our experience with turbines has all been with surplus engines. Now, that's a limited thing, too. The smaller turbine engine is available, but you'd have to use multiple engines. And that becomes expensive through one common gearbox.

**Who were some of the best drivers you competed against?**

In my day, Bill Muncey was top man. He had a lot of ability. He seemed to do everything right. I never saw Bill get into any great problem. There have been several others: Jack Regas, when

he was driving the *Hawaii Ka'i*. After he got the knack of driving the *Ka'i*, he was unbeatable. However, the boat had a lot going for it, too. Danny Foster was one of the early greats. I marveled the way he drove. He could really get the most out of a boat. But he was going out of it when a lot of these fellows were coming in. Bill Cantrell was a good driver, but he had unfavorable equipment because he was always trying new innovations. A lot of times he had breakups because he was brave enough to try new concepts, but as a driver, Bill always did a good job. Chuck Thompson was a good chauffeur—a little wild. Used to really hang out, you know, which wasn't always desirable. I think a person should always have a little safety factor.

**If you could be remembered for one thing, what would it be?**

Well, right now I guess the only thing I'm remembered for is that I hold the world's straightaway record. And I question sometimes that hasn't been forgotten. It's been so long ago.

**Is that your greatest thrill?**

Perhaps so. That's probably my greatest accomplishment. I never was a real active competitive driver. My status was mostly in the maintenance and operation of the boat—crew chief, mechanic. I was the innovator. ♦



# IT'S IN THE FAMILY

BY CRAIG FJARLIE

In late January 2020, the American Power Boat Association held its annual meeting and Hall of Champions banquet in Seattle. Jimmy Shane was inducted into the Hall of Champions in the Unlimited category.

When he made his acceptance speech, Shane commented how often inductees in other categories thanked family members for their support and encouragement. “Boat racing is a family activity,” he remarked. The truth of what he said was clearly evident in his family that evening, when his mother, Robin Shane, was presented with the Don Allen, Sr., Memorial Leadership Award.

From the earliest days of competing for the Gold Cup, family ties have been evident in Unlimited hydroplane racing. Sometimes the ties were from one

generation to the next. In other cases, siblings pursued speed on water, usually in competition with each other, but occasionally as participants on the same team.

Boat racing can provide a variety of opportunities for family members to carve their personal niche. Some are owners, others are drivers, some build boats, and others work on crews making technological advances. Some become officials, others do promotional duties and recruit sponsors.

Clearly, there is plenty of work to be done and members of some families have had experience in a number of positions.

The It's In the Family series will look at the way family ties have connected generations of racers. The initial segment, which follows, will examine the linkage when the first family member to venture into boat racing did so as an owner. The second segment will look at drivers and their descendants, and the third segment will focus on crew members, boat builders, officials, and promoters.

A few people, whose families stayed involved for decades, will be mentioned

in each segment, while others will come and go in rather short order.

Before we dive into the material, many thanks to Jim Sharkey for suggesting the idea and assisting with names of those who fit in the various categories.

The overall point of the series is that boat racing can offer involvement and enjoyment for families in a variety

of ways. Sure, one can cheer from the beach, but getting one's hands dirty—literally or figuratively—increases the feeling of community and belonging. There is a place for everyone who wants to be involved, and when the involvement is among family members, there's plenty to talk about at the dinner table.

## OWNERS:

**T**he historic record of Unlimited hydroplane racing contains the names of numerous individuals whose first involvement with boat racing was in the role of an owner. Many had family members who followed their lead and discovered enjoyment in competing on the nation's waterways.

In the very early years of racing for the Gold Cup, it became obvious that

racing could be a family affair. When competing for the Gold Cup was a new phenomenon, boats were often built with a seat for a riding mechanic, which sometimes was occupied by a relative of the owner.

J. Stuart Blackton had a business called Vitagraph Pictures, an early company in the fledgling movie industry. He also was commodore of the Atlantic Yacht Club. He entered a boat named *Viva* in the 1911 Gold Cup and contin-

ued racing with boats named *Baby Reliance* and *Baby Reliance V*. In 1914, his wife, Paula Blackton, was listed as owner of a craft named *Baby Speed Demon II* and actually won the Gold Cup that year.

Gar Wood came from a large family, invented the hydraulic hoist for trucks, and owned Wood Hoist and Body Company. He met boat builder Christopher Columbus Smith and was impressed with the work Smith did with his partner, Baldy Ryan. Wood bought a controlling interest in the company as the Smith-Ryan partnership was ending.

Wood won the Gold Cup for the first time in 1917 with *Miss Detroit II*. That same year, his brother Winfield drove



Hydroplane and Raceboat Museum

Horace E. Dodge, Jr., entered five boats in the 1933 Gold Cup, including the *Delphine IV* (top), which finished second with Bill Horn driving, and the *Delphine VII*, which finished third and was driven by its namesake, Delphine Baker, Dodge's sister.

*Miss Minneapolis* in the event. The following year, Gar Wood won the Gold Cup in a new boat, *Miss Detroit III*, while his brother George drove *Miss Detroit II* and another brother, Lewis, joined Winfield in the cockpit of *Miss Minneapolis*. Gar Wood achieved great success competing for the Gold Cup and the Harmsworth.

Horace Dodge and his brother, John Dodge, made a fortune in the automobile business with the Dodge Brothers Company. Both died in 1920 during the Spanish flu pandemic. Horace's family sold their share of the company five years later and his son, Horace E. Dodge, Jr., started racing soon thereafter, owning and driving a boat named *Solar Plexus* in the 1925 Gold Cup.

Dodge's daughter, Delphine, joined her brother by also getting into boat racing. She was listed as owner of a boat in the 1926 Gold Cup called *Nuisance* and won the 1927 President's Cup driving a boat named *Miss Syndicate*. Her first husband, J.H.R. Cromwell, also drove in the 1926 and '27 Gold Cup races.

Horace E. Dodge, Jr., campaigned many boats during the 1930s, won the Gold Cup in 1932 with a boat named *Delphine IV* and in 1936 with *Impshi*, and continued racing until 1955 with boats such as *My Sweetie* and *My Sweetie Dora*. Meanwhile, his son, Horace Dodge III, drove *Delphine X* in the 1950 Steel Cup, which was held in Pittsburgh.

The Dodge family became involved in racing again from 1966 to 1968 when Jim Ranger owned and drove the *My Gypsy*. Ranger's wife, Yvonne, was Delphine's daughter.

Industrialist Herb Mendelson entered boat racing in 1935 with a boat named *Notre Dame*, for his alma mater. Mendelson's first victory came in the President's Cup that year and in 1937 he won the Gold Cup and a second President's Cup. Mendelson's daughter, Shirley McDonald, entered Unlimited racing in 1962, with her own series of *Notre Dame* boats. She desperately desired to win the Gold Cup, but it proved elusive, in spite of her best efforts.

At a race on Lake Tahoe, also in 1935, Henry Kaiser, a contractor who built Hoover Dam and Grand Coulee Dam and who would become famous as a shipbuilder during World War II, entered a Baby Gar hull named *Bess*. The following year, Henry Kaiser, Jr., drove his father's boat, *Hornet II*, at Tahoe. The boat appeared at Detroit in 1949, re-named *Aluminum First*.

Another son, Edgar, was the most successful boat racer of the three. He entered racing in 1955 as the owner of the U-9 *Hawaii Ka'i*, a boat that was destroyed in a mile straightaway attempt in Hawaii. But the following year he introduced the *Hawaii Ka'i III*, the "Pink Lady," which remains one of the most beloved



Public Domain



Algonac-Clay Township Historical Society

**TOP:** J. Stuart Blackton.  
**ABOVE:** Gar Wood.



boats in the sport's history. *Hawaii Ka'i III* won eight races, including the 1958 Gold Cup.

More famous names from the business world began competing in Gold Cup-class racing in 1936. Ernest Wilson of Ingersoll, Ontario, was the owner and president of Ingersoll Machine & Tool Company. He entered a new boat named *Miss Canada II* in the Gold Cup; his son, Harold, was the driver; and Harold's wife, Lorna, was the riding mechanic. Victory was rare for the Wilson family, although *Miss Canada III* won the 1948 Silver Cup. *Miss Canada IV* made unsuccessful challenges for the Harmsworth in 1949 and 1950.

Robert Stanley Dollar was the son of Captain Robert Dollar, the founder of the successful Dollar Steam Ship Company. He purchased the former *Greenwich Folly* in 1936, brought it to his estate on Lake Tahoe, and changed its name to *Baby Skipalong*. His son, R. Stanley Dollar, Jr., drove the craft in a regatta on Lake Tahoe then later took his own boat, *Skip-A-Long*, to Detroit in 1948 and '49. He won the Harmsworth in '49 and also drove *Slo-mo-shun IV* to victory in the 1952 Gold Cup.

Dan Arena and Danny Foster, both from Oakland, California, built a boat named *Miss Golden Gate* in 1938 and hauled it to Detroit for the Gold Cup and finished second with Arena at the steering wheel and Foster along for the ride. From there, both Arena and Foster achieved success in Unlimited racing as builders and drivers in the years before and after World War II. Dan Arena's brother, Gene, was also a successful builder and driver of Unlimiteds.

Lou Fageol was also from Oakland and was the son of one of four brothers who founded Fageol Motors, a company that would become known as a builder of tractors, trucks, and buses. He entered his new boat, *So Long*, in the 1939 Gold Cup and continued driving boats after World War II. Fageol achieved his greatest success at the wheel of *Slo-mo-shun V*,



Frank Gudaitis



Hydroplane and Raceboat Museum



Hydroplane and Raceboat Museum

**TOP:** Herb Mendelson's *Notre Dame* in 1936, the year it won the Gold Cup. **MIDDLE:** Edgar Kaiser was the son of industrialist Henry Kaiser and owned the fan-favorite *Hawaii Ka'i III*, the winner of the 1958 Gold Cup. **ABOVE:** Ernest Wilson's *Miss Canada III* was driven by his son Harold Wilson and placed third in the 1938 Gold Cup. He's shown here leading Count Theo Rossi in *Alagi*, the eventual race winner.





which he drove to victories in the 1951 and 1954 Gold Cups.

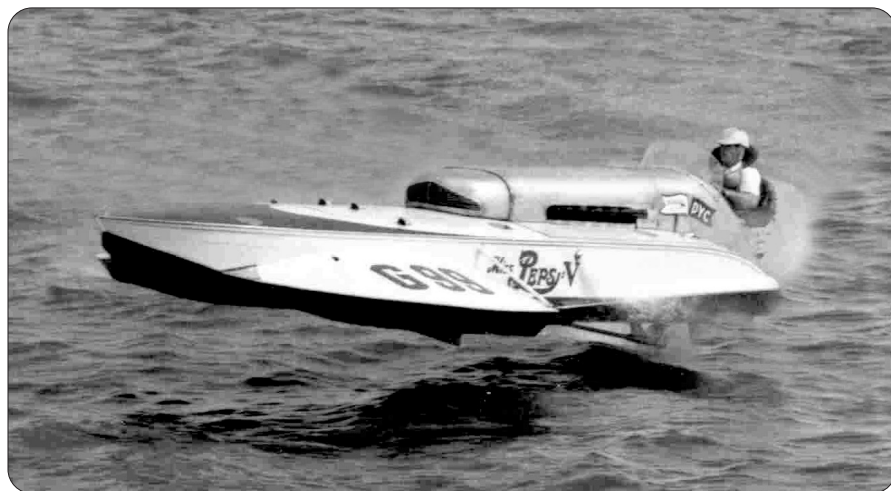
The 1949 Buffalo Launch Club Regatta included another Fageol as the driver of a 7-litre hydroplane. Ray Fageol, Lou's son, drove *So-Long II* in the event along with Unlimited-class boats and even scored points. It's interesting to note that Edgar Kaiser, Stanley Dollar, and Lou Fageol grew up together and, along with Dan Arena and Danny Foster, were friends with a mutual interest in boat racing.

Businessman Howard "Whitey" Hughes, the owner of a Detroit machine shop and no relation to the movie magnate and famous aviator of the same name, purchased a boat that had raced before the war under the name *Warnie*. Hughes changed its name to *Dukie* and drove it in 1946. His brother and business partner, Tom, was listed as co-owner when the boat ran again in 1947 and '48.

Walt, Roy, and Russell Dossin, who owned Dossin Food Products in Detroit, the distributor of Pepsi-Cola in Michigan and northern Ohio, leased *Dukie* from Howard Hughes in late 1946 and entered it in the President's Cup with the name *Pepsi-Cola III*. The following year they purchased *So-Long* from Lou Fageol, re-powered it with an Allison engine, and changed its name to *Miss Pepsi V*. Danny Foster drove the boat to victory in the Gold Cup and the President's Cup.

The Dossin brothers had a new *Miss Pepsi* built in 1948. Though Russ Dossin died unexpectedly that summer, Walt and Roy continued racing. A second *Miss Pepsi* was built in 1950, the famous twin-engined step hull that was driven by Chuck Thompson, won the President's Cup three times, and was high-point champion in both 1951 and '52.

Al D'Eath entered a boat named *Miss Grosse Pointe* in Unlimited racing in 1948. His sons, Tom and Roger, both later drove Unlimiteds. With 16 race victories, Tom is tied for 10th place on the list of drivers with the most wins in the



**TOP:** Lou Fageol drove his *So-Long, Jr.* in 1946 and 1947. **MIDDLE:** The Dossin brothers pose at the Detroit Yacht Club with some of the trophies they earned in Unlimited racing. They are, from the left, Walter Dossin, Russell Dossin, and Roy Dossin. **ABOVE:** One of the boats campaigned by the Dossin brothers was *Miss Pepsi V*, winner of the 1947 Gold Cup.



sport's history. He won races driving the *Miss U.S.*, *The Squire Shop*, and *Miss Budweiser*, won the national driver's title in 1988, and won Gold Cups in 1976, 1989, and 1990.

Jack Schafer, the owner of Schafer Bakeries in Detroit, also started in the Unlimteds in 1948 with a boat named *Such Crust*. It was the first of a series of nine different boats that carried the name. Schafer never drove his boats in competition, but his drivers were among the best in the business, including Dan Arena, Bill Cantrell, Roy Duby, Walt Kade, Chuck Thompson, and Bill Muncy. Jack Schafer, Jr., did drive, however. He started driving Unlimteds in 1977 and won the 1983 Columbia Cup at the wheel of *American Speedy Printing*.

The *Miss Canada* boats changed hands in 1950 when the team was purchased by J. Gordon Thompson and his son James G. Thompson, who were in the oil business. They bought *Miss Canada III* and *Miss Canada IV*, the latter of which was re-named *Miss Supertest* in 1952, and they won the Harmsworth three years in a row with *Miss Supertest III*, which used the mighty Rolls-Royce Griffon engine.

Joe Schoenith made his entry into Unlimited racing in 1950 when he purchased *Miss Frostie*, the former *Notre Dame*. The boat, which he named *Gale* for his W.D. Gale, Inc., electrical contracting business, had been lengthened to accommodate an Allison engine. Joe's son Lee drove the craft later in the season and the Schoenith family went on to assume a number of important roles within hydroplane racing.

Lee Schoenith won the Gold Cup in 1955 with *Gale V*, later served as a referee, and was chairman of the Unlimited Racing Commission. His younger brother Jerry drove and handled publicity for the Unlimited class, and Lee's wife, Shirley, was a scorekeeper and held administrative positions with the sport. The influence of the Schoenith family on the Unlimited class ranks above that of any other family in the history of the sport.



Hydroplane and Raceboat Museum



Hydroplane and Raceboat Museum



Sandy Ross Collection

**TOP:** Jack Schafer's *Such Crust* was the winner of the 1948 President's Cup and finished second in that year's Gold Cup with Dan Arena driving. **MIDDLE:** The Thompsons purchased the *Miss Canada IV* in 1950 and named it *Miss Supertest*. **ABOVE:** From the left, Bill Cantrell, Joe Schoenith, and Lee Schoenith of the Gale racing team in 1954.

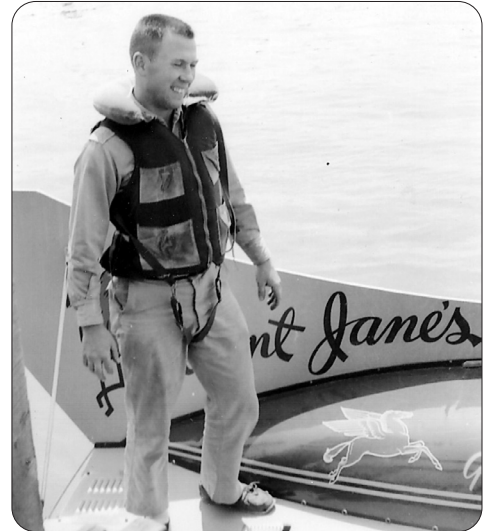




Hydroplane and Raceboat Museum



Hydroplane and Raceboat Museum



Hydroplane and Raceboat Museum

**TOP:** J. Phillip Murphy's *Breathless* in 1956.  
**ABOVE LEFT:** The *Miss Seattle Too* was owned by a group that included Glen and Milo Stoen.  
**ABOVE RIGHT:** Gordon Deneau on the deck of his *What-A-Pickle* in 1956.  
**RIGHT:** Bernie Little (left) with August Busch III of the Budweiser Brewing Company. Their long partnership created the most successful race team in the sport's history.



Hydroplane and Raceboat Museum



Burnett Bartley, Jr., entered his 7-litre inboard *Wildcatter* in the 1951 Silver Cup. Wally Harper was the driver that year, but in 1952, when 7-litre inboards were again allowed to enter the Silver Cup, Bartley drove the boat himself. His father, Burnett Bartley, Sr., was also there, driving a 7-litre named *Roughneck*. Both scored points in the Unlimited regatta. Burnett Bartley, Jr., had another shot at the Unlimiteds when he drove *Harrah's Club* in 1968.

J. Philip Murphy of Emeryville, California, the president of a steel mill called the Judson Pacific-Murphy Corporation, joined the Unlimited ranks as an owner in 1954. His new boat, *Breathless*, was the first boat designed by Ted Jones after he left the *Slo-mo-shun* team, but it never achieved the success of his other creations.

Murphy's son Jay was the first to drive the boat, then his younger son Roger also took his turn. The family also campaigned boats named *Muvalong* and *Breathless II*. The last boat passed through a number of hands and is currently owned by Mitch Evans, who is running it on the Vintage circuit as *Blue Chip*. Brothers Dick and Paul Gordon campaigned the boat with that name in 1963 and '64.

Stan Sayres sold *Slo-mo-shun V* in early 1956 to an organization called Roostertails, Inc., which campaigned the boat as *Miss Seattle*. One of the early partners in Roostertails, Inc., was Milo Stoen, who with his brother Glen owned a construction company in Bellevue, Washington.

The Roostertails, Inc., partnership broke up before the 1958 season and the shares were purchased by Jim Ausland, the Stoen brothers, and another pair of brothers: John and Hugh Anderson. In addition to running *Miss Seattle*, they introduced a new boat named *Miss Pay 'n Save*, which was sponsored by a Seattle-based drug-store chain. When that sponsorship ended following the 1959 season, the partners ran the boat as *Miss Seattle Too*. The boat crashed and was destroyed during the 1962 Gold Cup.

The Stoens remained involved in racing. They had a new boat built in 1963 that was named *Miss Exide*, but when that boat was destroyed in its second race, they purchased the old *Miss Wahoo*, renamed it *Miss Exide*, and ran it with considerable success through the 1965 season. Along the way they won a total of five races.

Jim and Gordon Deneau purchased the former *Miss Great Lakes II* in 1956 and ran it as *What-A-Pickle*. The following year the Deneau brothers added the former *Short Circuit* to their inventory and renamed it *What-A-Pickle II*. Following a long absence from racing, Gordon Deneau returned briefly in 1971 as owner of *Miss Timex*.

Bernie Little made his entrance into Unlimited racing in 1963 with a four-seated boat named *Tempo*. The following year he purchased the former *Maverick*, secured a sponsorship from Budweiser Brewing Company, and the rest is history. He

campaign a series of *Miss Budweiser* hydroplanes through the 2002 season and became the most dominate force in the sport's history, winning a total of 136 races, 23 national championships, and 14 Gold Cups—the most in the sport's history in all three of those categories. His list of drivers included some of the very best, among them Dean Chenoweth, Chip Hanauer, Jim Kropfeld, Dave Villwock, and Scott Pierce.

Little died on April 25, 2003, and his oldest son, Joe, campaigned *Miss Budweiser* for two more years in his father's memory.

Champion inboard racer Bill Sterett moved into the Unlimited ranks in 1966 with *Miss Chrysler Crew*, a boat built by Henry Lauterbach and powered by two Chrysler Hemi engines. The boat won the World Championship in Detroit in 1967 and Sterett went on to drive *Miss Budweiser* in 1968 and '69. His sons, Billy and Terry, had their own successful careers as drivers in the Unlimited class, with Billy, Jr., driving boats such as *Notre Dame* and *Pride of Pay 'n Pak*, and Terry driving *Smoother Mover* and *Miss Budweiser*.

Laird Pierce of Los Angeles, the owner of Plastics and Rubber Company, began his involvement with the Unlimiteds in 1967 and campaigned boats with the name *Parco's O-Ring Miss*. Pierce had little success in spite of having drivers such as Fred Alter and Billy Schumacher. But his son Scott Pierce



Billy Sterett, Jr., listens to his father, Bill Sterett, in 1970.

achieved more as a driver, winning a total of seven races in boats that included *Mr. Pringle's* and *Miss Budweiser*.

Bill Dreewes owned a boat named *Kawaguchi Travel Service* in 1982 and hired Wil Muncey, the oldest son of Bill Muncey, to drive it that year and in 1983. In 1984, Dreewes's wife, Debbie, owned another boat that carried the names *National School of Travel* and *Waterworks Park* and Wil Muncey was again the driver.

Mike Jones, an accountant by profession and a former president of the American Power Boat Association, entered Unlimited racing in 1994 as the owner and driver of *International News*. Later, his wife, Lori, was listed as co-owner of the boat. Although Jones turned cockpit duties over to others, the team remained active through the 2019 season. Mike Hanson won the Gold Cup in 2001 when the boat was named *Tubby's Grilled Submarines*, and Andrew Tate earned a national high-point championship in 2018 when the name was *Delta Realtrac*.

Steve Webster of Reading, Pennsylvania, bought Ed Cooper's piston-powered *Master Tire* in 2007, converted it to turbine power, and began racing it in 2009 with his son Mike in the cockpit. The boat had several names under Webster's ownership, beginning with *Matrix System*. In 2011, Webster purchased a former *Madison* hull and campaigned it through 2015 under various names, including *Great Scott!*

It's possible there are other families who have been inadvertently omitted from the list of people who began their involvement with Unlimited hydroplane racing as owners. Others, however, began their careers in the sport as drivers, crewmembers, boat builders, or sponsors. They will be included later in this series.

If readers want to point out an oversight when the listing is finished, your comments will be welcome, as always. After all, a complete and accurate record is the best historical documentation. ❖



Parco's Media Photo



Hydroplane and Raceboat Museum



Chris Denslow



Chris Denslow

**TOP LEFT:** Laird Pierce, the owner of the Parco's O-Ring Miss boats. **TOP RIGHT:** Scott Pierce, a son of Laird Pierce, drove Unlimiteds from 1981 to 2001 and won a total of seven races in boats such as *Executone*, *Mr. Pringles*, and *Miss Budweiser*. **MIDDLE:** Lori and Mike Jones won a total of 11 races during their career as owners of Unlimiteds. Most of those wins were tallied by this boat, the 2018 national champion *Delta Realtrac*. **ABOVE:** Steve Webster campaigned two different Unlimiteds that were driven by his son Mike. Here is the *PayneWest Insurance* at the Tri-Cities in 2014.



# HYDROFILE

## Race Team News by Lon Erickson



### Introducing 9 Strong Racing: An historic era ends as a boat sponsor moves to become a boat owner.

Jones Racing owners Lori and Mike Jones have agreed to sell substantial team assets to Vanessa and Darrell Strong of Pasco, Washington. The new team will be known as Strong Racing and plans to compete in all 2021 H1 Unlimited events.

Darrell Strong has been a sponsor on the H1 Unlimited circuit since 2013 when he joined the Webster family's U-22 team on behalf of PayneWest Insurance. In 2015, Strong moved his sponsorship to Go Fast Turn Left Racing and remained with that team through the 2019 HAPO Columbia Cup.

"Lori and I are very excited to welcome the Strong's as owners of a new H1 team," Mike Jones said. "Another full-time team on the circuit is very positive."

Strong had been looking to increase his presence in the sport since early fall and finally decided to purchase the U-9 and primary equipment as his best step toward becoming a top contender for 2021 and beyond.

"Vanessa and I are committed to making this new team a benchmark in the sport and we're really excited and gratified for this opportunity," he said.

Brian Hajny has been named crew chief for Strong Racing. Hajny has held several crew and H1 Unlimited positions in the past, including chief referee. He most recently served as crew member and radio man for Miss Madison's second team, which ran as *Oberto Super Salami* during the 2019 season.

Corey Peabody has been under contract with Strong Racing since October and will drive the U-9. Peabody became a qualified Unlimited driver in 2016 and has been driving Graham Trucking's U-98 *American Dream* entry.

With the sale, Mike Jones ends an Unlimited career that goes back to when he became a qualified Unlimited driver in 1993. He is a past president of the APBA and since the 1950s has competed as a driver in virtually every APBA class.

Jones Racing has many trophies to its credit in the Unlimited class over the years, including the APBA Gold Cup in 2001 and 2018 and the H1 Unlimited national championship in 2018.

The new Strong Racing team will temporarily operate out of the Jones Racing shop in Enumclaw, Washington.



Corey Peabody



Brian Hajny



Vanessa and Darrell Strong



9 Strong Racing



# MY \$0.02 WORTH

## Editorial Comment by Andy Muntz



**T**hat's a wrap! So long, 2020. As they say, don't let the door hit your backside on your way out.

Usually at this time of year, we look back at the previous 12 months and reminisce with some fondness about all the good things that happened. We remember wonderful vacations, gatherings with our friends and relatives, and perhaps an excellent live performance that we saw, a fine meal we enjoyed at a great restaurant, or maybe a good movie that we watched in a theater. There would have been exciting hydroplane races to remember, too.

But there was little of that in 2020. Instead, we stayed home much of the time, in quarantine—trying to stay out of reach of the lethal Covid-19 virus.

It was a memorable year, certainly, but for all the wrong reasons.

Wildfires ravaged the west, filling the air with smoke thousands of miles away and spawning a “firenado” warning in California. The hurricanes were so numerous they began to run out of names, there were numerous deadly tornadoes, and something called a derecho

leveled crops in Iowa. Ice caps melted at an alarming rate, monoliths suddenly appeared across the world, and a star two million times brighter than the sun suddenly disappeared.

Mr. Peanut was killed off and then reincarnated as Baby Nut, mystery seeds arrived from China, so-called murder hornets were found in Washington near the Canadian border, and vast swarms of locusts destroyed crops in east Africa, causing many of us to wonder when the tally would also include plagues of frogs, pestilence, boils, or lice—or when the rivers would turn to blood.

And, this is not even mentioning racial unrest and rioting in the streets, the impeachment of the president, and a months-long hacking deep into government computer systems by Russian operatives.

Plus it was a presidential election year, an ordeal in 2020 that left us so polarized it seems we can no longer agree on a simple baseline of truth.

Then, above it all, there was Covid, the microorganism that changed everything—the way we work, the way our

kids go to school, and the way we entertain ourselves.

For Unlimited hydroplane racing, the tiny germ did what only a world war had been able to do 75 years ago—the cancellation of an entire season. A hydroplane didn't even so much as touch water until one boat finally took a test run on Halloween day.

As of this writing, the disease is still out of control; it's killing people at a rate that's faster than ever. But there also is hope. Two vaccines are available, and efforts are underway to get the miracle drugs into the arms of a majority of people as soon as possible.

Still, experts are warning us that normal may not return to our lives until mid-summer or early fall.

What that means to the 2021 Unlimited racing season we don't yet know. We can only hope for the best. But, for now, we can at least say a well-deserved good riddance to 2020; and a cautious welcome to 2021.

The new year certainly couldn't be any worse—could it? ❖

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Letters are welcome, but may be edited for clarity and space.

**PLEASE JOIN US AT THE NEXT MEETING OF UNLIMITEDS UNANIMOUS**

The January meeting has been canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Check our website for more information.