



UNLIMITED NEWSJOURNAL

A Chronicle of Speed

THE SWAMI SEZ: Only five, but they should be good.

by Brian Anderson

The season will be short, again. After it looked like the sport would stabilize in terms of races after a solid 2013 season, race sites have gone away and stayed away. Remaining at this point are the five races that have been the backbone of the sport for decades. The five solid sites—Madison, Tri-Cities, Seattle, Detroit, and San Diego—comprise the current race schedule. But,

as the struggle to attract new sites remains challenging, the competition on the water looks to be good.

Even though only two drivers won races in 2015, the number of boats that have a legitimate shot at winning is at least five, topped by defending champion Jimmy Shane

in the Madison, Indiana, team now sporting the colors of HomeStreet Bank and with the number U-1. Giving him challenge this year will be his old nemesis J Michael Kelly in the U-5 *Graham Trucking*, who was victorious in Seattle last season.

Also getting into the fight will be Cal Phipps in the U-27, which has only secured the *Miss DiJulio* sponsorship for the Northwest races so far, but fully intends to run the full circuit. The fastest boat not planning on the full season is the U-16 (formerly U-96), which will pick up sponsorship from Oberto for Seattle and possibly the Tri-Cities race. Jean Theoret will pilot the boat.

Right behind these top four is the U-3 team, which made a return after a few years absence. The only piston boat on the circuit will certainly push the top contenders and may beat them if all holds together. Jimmy King can still drive the red boat into contention. There



will be one young gun in Andrew Tate who begins his career with a fast ride in the U-9.

The remainder of the fleet shakes out with familiar names, such as Brian Perkins in Greg O'Farrell's U-21, which will appear as *Payne West Insurance* and will sport a new paint scheme featuring blue and green. The U-100 hull is

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My \$0.02 Worth

Editorial Comment



Andy
Muntz

I read an article recently about the demise of miniature golf in the United States. The activity, developed in the mid-1950s, was huge during the 1960s and into the '80s. Putt-putt courses were everywhere, a great pastime for family outings with the kids and the site of many first dates.

But, beginning in the '90s, interest in miniature golf began to wane. To develop more business, the owners of miniature golf courses tried adding new attractions such as batting cages, laser tag, and bumper cars to their facilities to try and stay afloat. Yet, for the most part, it hasn't helped and miniature golf courses with their windmills and plastic dinosaurs are closing at a rapid pace.

What's the culprit that caused this change? According to the research, putt-putt golf and other similar activities have fallen victim to electronic entertainment. Kids apparently would rather stay home and play their video games

Hydroplane racing is not miniature golf, obviously, yet this change does provide an important lesson for our sport. The demise of miniature golf serves as a reminder that tastes and conditions are constantly changing. Just because an activity might have attracted interest 15 or 20 years ago, doesn't mean it will do the same today or will attract any interest tomorrow.

It seems to me that a large number of hydroplane fans spend a great deal of energy longing for the good old days. Many of us who grew up in the Seattle area during the 1950s and '60s, for example, can recall a time when our parents thought nothing of just piling us all into the family station wagon, dropping us off at the Stan Sayres pits each morning during Seafair Week, and letting us wander around by ourselves all day.

The thing is, that was more than 50 years ago and those days have long passed. That sport disappeared along with carbon

paper, rotary-dial phones, and afternoon cartoons with J.P. Patches or Captain Puget.

As we consider the sport's future, we have two choices: We can sit around like old codgers on a park bench complaining about today's kids and why they don't do things the way they used to do them, or we can embrace change and be willing to try something different.

I would advocate for the latter. The sport can't survive by longing for the return of a time gone by and doing things the way they've always been done. Instead, the sport must consider the interests of today's young people and find ways to do things that will attract their interest. That might even mean doing some things radically different.

So, as we begin the 2016 season, let's consider the importance of attracting young fans to our sport so that our future will not be like that of miniature golf.

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Letters may be edited for clarity and space.

The Swami gazes into the crystal ball.

Continued from page 1

now the U-99.9 and will carry on the Fred Leland legacy with sponsorship from Carstar and the return of the famous (or infamous) KISW Radio station backing. The team has showed marked improvement last season and Kevin Eacret will drive. Tom Thompson returns driving the Raney's U-11 *Peters & May* and Dave Warren will be in the U-12, or will it be U-14? Rounding out the fleet will be Kelly Stocklin's U-18 *Bucket List Racing*.

So what can we really expect in 2016? There are only five races and

any sort of championship battle will be decided by consistency and will go down to the last heats in the season-ending race in San Diego. The river level will hopefully not decide the opening race in Madison. A good opener would be a plus thing for fan enthusiasm.

Tri-Cities will undoubtedly bring us hot temperatures, fast speeds on the Columbia River if the wind behaves, and typically some great racing. Seattle's Seafair will bring its usual large crowds and live local TV coverage on the slightly choppy Lake Washington, which is

steeped in hydro tradition.

The APBA Gold Cup returns to Detroit after a one-year absence, a race where beating the river is just as tough as beating the competition. There may be some broken boats for this event, as well as high speeds on the long course. The championship gets decided in San Diego where the salt water produces big speed and potential mechanical issues.

The racing will be good in 2016. Unfortunately, there just won't be enough of it until there are more races.

The Swami lays down the season.

THE TOP CONTENDERS:

1) U-1 HomeStreet Bank

Driver: Jimmy Shane, 11 career wins.

Owner: City of Madison, Indiana, 24 career wins

Home: Madison, Indiana

Swami Sez: After getting their feet wet last season as sponsor of the U-3, HomeStreet Bank takes over as Oberto departs. Will sport a new light-blue & white paint scheme. New crew chief Dan Hoover will keep the boat at the top and repeat as champion. Jimmy Shane cannot be beat unless they have mechanical difficulties. Will be top qualifier at minimum of three races and should win three, if not more.



Chris Denslow

2) U-5 Graham Trucking,

Driver: J Michael Kelly, 6 career wins.

Owner: Precision Marine, 17 career wins

Home: Decatur, Indiana

Swami Sez: The primary competition for Shane the last couple of seasons will continue to challenge for wins. The team has the potential to take it all and win multiple victories, but their boat this year was the team's number-two entry a year ago. (This year's U-5 raced as the U-7 Graham Trucking II a year ago, replacing a hull that was damaged in a vehicle accident and showing the wear of years of top racing.) The team will be fast in qualifying, will be in most final heats, and should take home at least one victory.



Chris Denslow

3) U-27 Wiggins Racing

Driver: Cal Phipps, 0 career wins.

Owner: Wiggins Racing, 0 career wins

Home: Gadsden, Alabama

Swami Sez: The 2013 Gold Cup winning hull was the surprise of 2015 and that trend should continue in this season, although its participation will depend on securing sponsorships. Extensive off-season work on the hull should have it going just as fast this time around. Veteran Cal Phipps should be in the top three for qualifiers at most races and be in most final heats. Will finish as high as second in a final and a victory would not be considered an upset.



H.I. Unlimited

4) U-3 "The Turbinator"

Driver: Jimmy King, 0 career wins

Owner: Ed Cooper ,4 career wins

Home: Evansville, Indiana

Swami Sez: A welcome sight in 2015 was the return of the red U-3 from Indiana. Jimmy King remains one of the best drivers to have never won on the unlimited circuit. Expect the turbo-Allison-powered piston boat to be fast, but a couple miles per hour off the top turbine boats. The boat is strong enough to win heats, but reliability of the aging power plants is a question mark. If it can make it through to the final, this combination has the potential to stage an upset



Lon Erickson

LOOKING TO IMPROVE:

5) U-9 Les Schwab Tires

Driver: Andrew Tate, Rookie

Owner: Mike & Lori Jones, 2 career wins.

Home: Kent, Washington

Swami Sez: Rookie Tate is the son of long-time Winston Eagle driver Mark Tate and tested in the boat prior to the 2015 season. His learning curve may be long and, with the short season, that doesn't favor him, but the boat is fast and consistent. Should see some decent qualifying speeds with middle-of-the-pack results in the prelims. Will make at least two final heats. A win would be a major upset.



Chris Denslow

JUST MAYBE:

6) U-21, Go Fast, Turn Left Racing

Driver: Brian Perkins, 0 career wins

Owner: Greg O'Farrell, 0 career wins

Home: Maple Valley, Washington

Swami Sez: The current hull is slowly but surely turning into a contender, but still a few ticks back of the top teams. Brian Perkins remains as the driver and most likely will see middle-of-the-pack qualifying speeds and at least two trips to final.



Lon Erickson

7) U-99.9 Carstar powered by Miss Rock KISW

Driver: Kevin Eacret, 0 career wins

Owner: Stacy Briseno, 20 career wins (includes totals as Leland Unlimited)

Home: Kirkland, Washington

Swami Sez: One of the true surprises of the 2015 season as it made it into some final heats. If it can maintain the improvement shown last season, it will make it in to some final heats. But, don't expect blinding speeds. Just heat finishes and will be right there should the top runners falter.



H1 Unlimited

8) U-16 Ellstrom Racing

Driver: Jean Theoret, 6 career wins

Owner: Ellstrom Family, 29 career wins

Home: Seattle

Swami Sez: Absolute fast boat that would challenge for the championship, if not for its abbreviated schedule. A one- or two-race deal with Oberto is for the two Washington state races. Its plans beyond that are not known. May qualify fastest in Tri-Cities and should be in the final heat at both races.



H1 Unlimited

9) U-11 Miss Peters & May

Driver: Tommy Thompson, 0 career wins.

Owner: Scott Raney, 0 career wins

Home: Edmonds, Washington

Swami Sez: Has underperformed on the circuit for the last few seasons, but off-season upgrades to engines have the potential to improve the boat's performance in 2016. It may sneak into a few final heats.



H1 Unlimited

10) U-7 Team Porter Racing (sponsor TBD)

Driver: Jeff Bernard, 3 career wins

Owner: Precision Marine, 17 career wins

Home: Decatur, Indiana

Swami Sez: The U-7 to start the season will be the former U-57 FEDCO hull, originally built in 1990. The hull is an older design and the driver will be the strong point in this combination. Don't expect to see it run with the top boats, but Jeff will get the most out of it. There are plans to switch hulls mid-season, but details have not been finalized.



11) U-18 Bucket List Racing

Driver: Kelly Stocklin, 0 career wins

Owner: Kelly Stocklin, 0 career wins

Home: Sammamish, Washington

Swami Sez: An incredibly hard working team that is limited by the smaller horsepower T-53 turbine. Expect them to qualify near the bottom of the speed charts and finish the preliminary heats, but will not typically score enough points to make the finals.



Chris Denslow

12) U-12 (or is it the U-14?)

Driver: Dave Warren, 0 career wins

Owner: Jay Leckrone, 0 career wins

Home: Burien, Washington

Swami Sez: Not much news coming from this team, but if last year is any indication, it will not qualify well and finish heats sporadically.



H1 Unlimited

BOATS WHERE ART THOU?

U-37 (former Beacon Plumbing)

Owner: Billy & Jane Schumacher, 4 career wins

Home: Seattle

Swami Sez: It must be around somewhere. The hull would be a good runner if the price were right.



Lon Erickson

U-22 Webster Racing

Driver: Mike Webster, 0 career wins

Owner: Webster Family, 0 career wins

Home: Reading, Pennsylvania

Swami Sez: For sale and could be had at a reasonable price for someone wanting to either get involved or move up from the smaller ranks.



Lon Erickson

2016 H1 Unlimited Fleet Lineup, June 25

U #	hull #	Boat Name	Driver	Sponsor	Owner	notes
U-1	# 0706	Miss HomeStreet Bank	Jimmy Shane	HomeStreet Bank	Miss Madison Racing	
U-3	# 0203	Ace Hardware ~ tbd	Jimmy King	<i>tbd</i>	Ed Cooper Go3 Racing	race ready > seeking sponsorship
U-5	# 9712	Graham Trucking	J.Michael Kelly	Graham Trucking	Ted Porter - PPE Ilc	U-7 Graham Trucking in 2015, former Bud T-5
U-7	# 9010	<i>tbd</i>	Jeff Bernard	<i>tbd</i>	Ted Porter - PPE Ilc	former U-57 Fedco
U-9	# 92102	Les Schwab Tire	Andrew Tate **	Les Schwab/Sound Prop Jones Racing		Mike/Lori Jones
gbr U-11	# 9401	Peters & May	Tom Thompson	Peters & May	URG - Unlimited Racing Group	Scott/Shannon Raney former Bud T-4
U-14	# 96100	Centurion Racing	David Warren	<i>tbd</i>	Centurion Unlimited	Jay Leckrone > seeking sponsorship
U-16/96	# 1496	Ellstrom Elam Plus	Jean Theoret	Ellstrom Ind.	Ellstrom Racing	new hull 2014
U-18	# 1218	Bucket List Racing	Dustin Echols **	Snuskitush Enterpr.	Bucket List/Kelly Stocklin	G class hull retrofit with T-53 turbine
U-21	# 0721	Go Fast Turn Left	Brian Perkins	Payne West & addtl.	Greg/Brian O'Farrell	rebuilt from 2014 T.C. accident
U-27	# 0717	Wiggins Racing	Cal Phipps	Dalton Industries	Milt & Charley Wiggins	former U-17 Our Gang Racing hull
U-99.9	# 9899	Leland Unlimited	Kevin Eacret	CarStar/Miss Rock	Leland Racing	"big red" aka Faithful

** 2016 rookie

Other Possible Unlimited Hulls In Existence

U-2	# 0302	<i>tbd</i>	<i>tbd</i>	<i>tbd</i>	Dave Bartush	former Trendwest - needs rebuild
U-5	# 0001	<i>tbd</i>	<i>tbd</i>	<i>tbd</i>	Ted Porter - PPE Ilc	former bud T-6, hull needs rebuild
U-10	# 9501	<i>tbd</i>	<i>tbd</i>	<i>tbd</i>	USA Racing/Gregory family	former bud T-3 - 88 Degree
U-11 b/u	9302/0925	<i>tbd</i>	<i>tbd</i>	<i>tbd</i>	URG - Unlimited Racing Group	U-11 back-up hull - needs rebuild
U-13	# 8700	Spirit of Detroit	<i>tbd</i>	<i>tbd</i>	Dave Bartush	\$\$\$ and equip. depth is an issue
U-16	# 0116	former U-1 Spirit of Qatar	<i>tbd</i>	<i>tbd</i>	Ellstrom Racing	fire in Doha 2013 - needs repairs
U-22	# 8806	Webster Racing	<i>tbd</i>	<i>tbd</i>	Webster Racing	FOR SALE
U-37	# 1188	Schumacher Racing	<i>tbd</i>	<i>tbd</i>	Schumacher Racing	FOR SALE - in storage in N.Y.
U-100 b/u	# 0010	<i>tbd</i>	<i>tbd</i>	<i>tbd</i>	Leland Racing	2 flips in 2013 - needs major rebuild
U-100 b/u	# 9701	<i>tbd</i>	<i>tbd</i>	<i>tbd</i>	Leland Racing	"Casper", display duty, needs modifications
U-787	# 9516	<i>tbd</i>	<i>tbd</i>	<i>tbd</i>	Ellstrom Racing	Boeing 787-needs retrofit/upgrade
U-??	<i>tbd</i>	<i>tbd</i>	<i>tbd</i>	<i>tbd</i>	Greg/Brian O'Farrell	new, unfinished hull

~ Other H1 Drivers To Consider ~

Mike Webster	some may need H1 driver re-certification
Jesse Robertson	Ryan Mallow
Kip Brown	Greg Hopp
Jon Zimmerman	Jamie Nilsen
	Dave Villwock

plus any upcoming drivers from the limited ranks (much longer learning curve to step up into an unlimited)

Patrick Haworth, Cory Peabody, and ???

Introducing Andrew Tate.

Andrew Tate takes the wheel of Les Schwab Tires this season. He comes from a family with a long history in boat racing. In the following conversation, conducted by Craig Fjarlie during the Tri-Cities test day, Tate reviews his family history and looks forward to his rookie season with the unlimiteds.



Lon Erickson

Your family has a long history in racing.

My great-grandfather, Joe Tate, Sr., started. it's hard to put an exact date on when he started racing. If I had to guess, I would say late '20s or early '30s, for sure.

What did he race, inboards or outboards?

It was the inboard category. He built his own boats and motors. I'm not exactly sure on the class.

And your grandfather, we saw him take an unlimited out.

Oh, yeah. Grandpa Joe had the opportunity to take Steve Woome's *Smokin' Joe's* out one time. That was really special for him. It meant a lot.

He raced inboards for a long time.

Oh, yeah. He raced inboards for a long, long time. His dad got him involved. He raced all the way up

until, I believe, right around his 70th birthday.

He was one of the oldest guys who ever took an active unlimited out on a real race course.

Yeah, I think he was. He ran 7-litres basically up until the time that the officials told him they were worried for his health and his safety, and others' health and safety. But he really loved it, he loved to go fast.

Your father and your mother both raced.

Yeah, that's actually how they met. My mom ran 145s. She's from Azusa, California. She actually met my father on the APBA limited circuit. My dad was racing limited inboard hydroplanes as well. She was pretty young when she moved out to Michigan and they got married. The rest is kind of history there.

Did you have a choice about what you wanted to race, or was it kind of like, "that's what we do?"

As a little kid you always tell yourself you want to be a boat racer, being around it all the time. I knew I always wanted to do it. I guess when the time came and decided we were going to get our first J Hydro, it was almost surreal. You know, finally getting to do the thing

that you've been dreaming about for nine, ten years of your life. You always imagine yourself in the cockpit. But, to be in the cockpit. To me, it's the greatest high you could ever have. The total adrenalin rush, it's just you and the boat, the water and your competitors. All your problems, life disappears. It's just something else.

Are your parents proud of you for the opportunities now, in the unlimited?

I think so. They couldn't make it out this weekend, but they've sent me some nice messages over the last couple days.

And how old are you now?

I'm 26. I'll be 27 this August.

You and Jimmy Shane are pretty close to the same age.

Yeah, Jimmy is no longer the youngest H1 pilot. I think that might bother him a little bit. So I gave him a hard time and told him I can't wait to get on TV and call him an old man! (Laughter.)

Before you got into the unlimited, did you have a favorite class or category that you liked best?

Growing up I always enjoyed watching the tunnel boats, the

45s, the 120s, and Champ boats. They were always at some of the unlimited races. My brother and I always made sure to set aside time to watch those guys, mostly because we were young and didn't know any better and those guys crashed the most. As far as the excitement factor goes, those were always our favorite to watch. Up until this point as far as driving race boats go, my favorite (is) C Stock Hydro. As far as driving a boat, racing against competitors and just being a competitor, it's top notch. Anyone can win on any given day. And, if you're not on your game, then you're not a factor. I enjoy that the most. It's the thrill of racing against people on an equal level and knowing that if you did beat them, or if you happen to win, you were better on that day. It wasn't your motor. It wasn't your prop. It wasn't your boat. More or less, it was you that won that race.

It's a different challenge with the unlimited.

Yeah, it's definitely different. So far I'm kind of making sure I don't get too far ahead of myself. I'm gonna be battling my urge to want to go really, really fast along with the learning curve, because the learning curve is steep here. As long as I keep my competitiveness in check at the same level and rate that I'm learning, I feel the U-9, Jones Racing, Les Schwab team is gonna be successful. I just have to make sure not to get too far ahead of myself and take it as it comes, and then take advantage of opportunities as they're afforded to me.

OK, thanks and good luck this season.

Four boats test in the Tri-Cities.



1
Chris Denslow



2
Chris Denslow



3
Chris Denslow



4
Chris Denslow



5
Lon Erickson

Four unlimited hydroplanes and Bill Muncey's former "Blue Blaster" appeared on the Columbia River in Tri-Cities, Washington for a testing session on June 10. [1] The crew of the *Miss HomeStreet Bank* prepare the defending champion for its test run. [2] Jimmy Shane with some friends. [3] The crew of the U-9 *Les Schwab Tires* make last-minute preparations for a run on the river. [4] the U-5 *Graham Trucking*. [5] The participants and organizers. Seated from left, Kathy Powell, Tri-Cities Water Follies Event Director, and Lori Schumacher, Water Follies administrative assistant. Standing, from the left, Jimmy Shane, J. Michael Kelly, Corey Peabody, Andrew Tate, and Jeff Bernard.

FIFTY YEARS AGO THIS SUMMER ...

My Gypsy driver Jim Ranger looks back to 1966.

Google the words “hydroplane racing” and add “1966” and you’ll find plenty of news about the tragic crashes 50 years ago that redefined the sport. Black Sunday became a searing wakeup call about the dangerous side of racing. But, for *My Gypsy* driver Jim Ranger, 1966 means much more than that. It was the summer he captured his only race victory, the year he was a rookie driver aboard a brand new boat. Ranger recently spoke with UNJ’s Steve Nelson from his home on Whidbey Island, north of Seattle.

“I won one race, and that was in Seattle,” Ranger says. “If you want to look at the calendar, that is 50 years, this year. And I am still alive and kicking! Well, I’m alive. I don’t know how good I can kick any more. We lost Mira Slovak in 2014, so I don’t think there are too many people alive who raced 50 years ago.”

Ranger saw his first race in 1953 when his father took him to the Gold Cup in Seattle. Twelve years later, he got an opportunity to drive in one. By then Ranger was married to Yvonne Dodge, whose family was well connected to Detroit’s boat racing scene. Her uncle, Horace Dodge Jr., had raced the *My Sweetie* and her mother, Delphine Dodge, won the 1927 President’s Cup aboard *Miss Syndicate*.

Oddly enough, boat racing wasn’t Ranger’s first choice. In 1965, he began talking about sprint car races and driving the Indy 500. But, Yvonne’s grandmother, Anna, would hear none of it. “Her grandmother said she’d prefer I went into boat racing, since it was a much safer business,” he explained.



Jim Ranger in the cockpit of the *My Gypsy*

Sandy Ross Collection

She was right. In the 15 years prior to 1966, only one driver had been killed in hydroplane action, compared to 28 who had died during Indy class car racing events. So, she opened her ample checkbook and bankrolled what became the *My Gypsy* racing program. According to Ranger, “Let’s just say she took care of everything.”

The *My Gypsy*

Ranger contacted Lee Schoenith and commissioned the W. D. Gale Company of Detroit to build the hydroplane and assemble an engine, gearbox, drive shaft, prop and trailer. Ranger was thrilled with the craftsmanship. “Fred Duby was one of the greatest wood butchers I’ve



Jim and Yvonne Ranger

ever met,” he said. “Bill Cantrell and I went all through the south buying oak for the boat. Believe me, there was as much oak in the dumpster as there was in the boat, because if it didn’t meet his [Duby’s] criteria, it wasn’t put in the boat.”

Every weekend all winter long, Ranger worked alongside future crewmembers Graham Heath and Bob Espland. “We worked all winter in Detroit at a building that I leased, sometimes 16 to 18 hours a day, just to get the engines together.” Heath and Espland assembled the engines. “Grammer and Bob Espland are what made the *Gypsy* go. Period,” Ranger says. “There are no two ways about it. W.D. Gale built the boat, but it was loved by both of those guys. They were family. Two people who I was lucky enough to have in my life, when I was boat racing.”

The crew not only worked hard, they also ate well. “Every Saturday we’d have a fried chicken dinner,” Ranger recalls. “He [Cantrell] would fry chicken and bake potatoes and gravy and okra and creamed corn. Man, you name it, it was a feast. I looked forward to those Saturdays. Freddy Duby,

Cantrell, Roy Duby, Graham Heath, Bob Espland and myself. It was just a bunch of guys together on Saturdays... building a boat.”

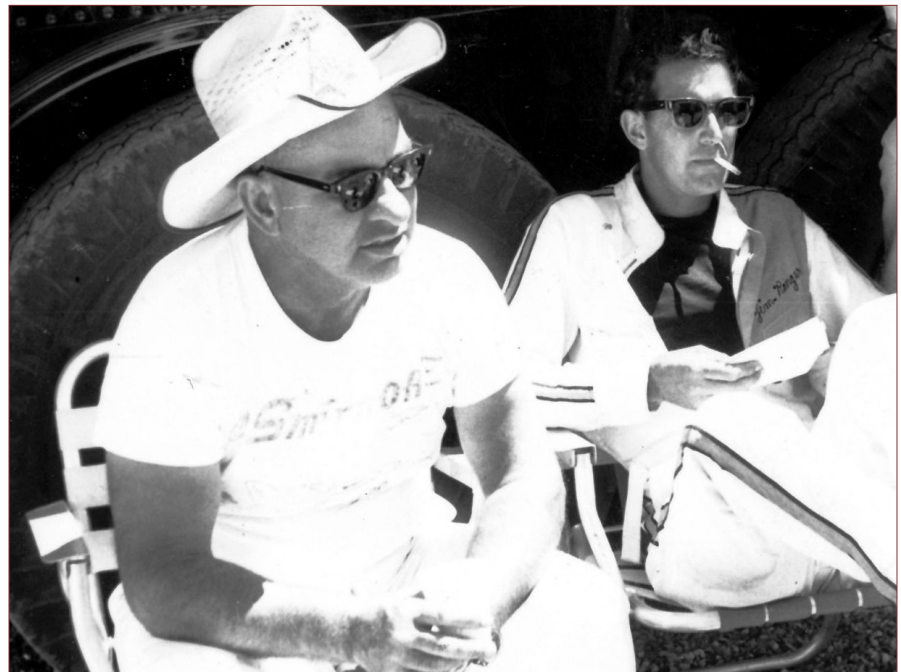
The boat was designated as the U-15 to represent both Yvonne Dodge Ranger’s birthday and the date she and Ranger were married. The boat was named to recognize Dodge’s *My Sweetie* speedboat and to honor Yvonne, who Ranger referred to as *Gypsy*. “Her attitude in life was very free,” he says. “She

never hated anybody; she loved everybody. She was just a phenomenal lady. She came from a pretty wealthy family, but you would never know it.”

Test Run

In May 1966, with the orange paint barely dry, the U-15 was lowered into the Detroit River for a test run. It was also Ranger’s first and only driving lesson. “I’d never driven a race boat in my life. I just knew they went fast and remembered seeing them in Seattle. And, it was a challenge!”

On the first trip out, Bill Cantrell replaced the driver’s seat with a hunk of 2 by 12 lumber so he and Ranger could squeeze into the crowded cockpit together, perched on a couple of pillows. After firing up the Allison and taking a few wide ovals, Cantrell returned to shore, gassed up the boat, and handed the reins over to Ranger. In no time, the newbie felt comfortable with turns.



Bill Cantrell (left) and Jim Ranger

“Back then, you went into a corner and threw it sideways, and then you stepped on the gas again,” he says. “You set it up. Today, they don’t do that. They just go into a corner and power their way through.”

“Believe it or not, it’s harder to race a car. You have grandstands and posts and fences. Not that you see them, but you see them out of the corner of your eye. In a boat, there are no picket fences, pylons or telephone poles to tell you how fast you are going. There is a definite sensation of speed, because of the altitude of your boat.”

The Race Season Begins

The 1966 season opener in Tampa was nearly washed-out when a hurricane blew through a few days prior. Organizers pulled the boats into banana sheds for protection. When the skies cleared,



Sandy Ross Collection

it was back to business on race day. Just before the first heat, *Miss Lapeer* driver Colonel Warner Gardner pulled Ranger aside. “He said, ‘Son, you just follow me. You won’t get in trouble. Just stay to the outside and just follow me,’” Ranger remembers. “Well I followed him and as he took me to the line. He backed off it and I went right by him and I crossed about 30 seconds too quick. So, after that heat, I went to him and said ‘What the hell you doing?’ He said that was my first lesson. ‘Don’t

listen to anybody. Just trust your watch.”

Lesson learned. Ranger finished the day in seventh place overall. *My Gypsy*’s second race was the President’s Cup on the Potomac River. In two tragic accidents, three veteran drivers were killed before the race was stopped. Ranger says the racing community was shaken. “We discovered the truth about boat racing. It can happen anytime, anywhere, to anybody. Musson, Manchester, and Wilson got killed. That is forever embedded in my brain. I had met Rex and Donny and Ron, but I was a rookie and they were pros.”

Ranger says his crew forged tighter relationships to work through the loss. “I guess maybe it brought me and my crew and my wife closer. Just the reality of watching three people, in a sport that hadn’t killed anybody in years, eliminate three great drivers. Three great crews.”

“After that race, Shirley Mendelson McDonald, owner of the *Notre Dame*, traveled with us for the rest of the season as part of our crew,” Ranger said. “Shirley loved boat racing and loved being around it. And if she couldn’t have a boat in it, then she still wanted to be around it.”



Sandy Ross Collection

From the left: Ranger, Graham Heath and Bob Espland



Jim Ranger

Gold Cup

The next race was the Gold Cup in Detroit. The *My Gypsy* struggled to start, but finished strong. “I couldn’t get the boat started for the first two heats, and for the third heat I beat Freddy Alter to make it into the final. It was a home race and Yvonne’s grandmother was watching the race on television.”

But the Gold Cup was overshadowed by yet another tragedy, when driver Chuck Thompson was killed while piloting the *Miss Smirnoff*. For the second time in two weeks, the race teams dug deep to cope. Ranger remembers that Yvonne had her own way of staying involved.

“She would always come down and give me my life jacket and my helmet, on the dock. And then I would take off, thinking that she stayed on the dock to watch everyone go into the first corner. But a couple of two or three years later, Bob Espland told me that the minute I took off, she would take off and go sit in a van in the VIP room at the trailer until everyone got around the first corner, then she would watch the rest of the race.”

Those fatalities, plus two more over the next two years, were tough on everybody. “The period from 1966 to 1968 was a pretty black time in boat racing, meaning death. Brow got killed. The Colonel got killed. I don’t think the speeds were that much higher than they were two or three years in the past. I just think that boat designs were different and you became more of a flyer. The boats became more of an airplane wing and less crown. I just think it was a really, really bad and hard time for unlimiteds.”

Victory

Several weeks later, the fleet limped into Seattle, hitting the middle point in the 10-race season. Ranger’s best finish to date thus far in 1966 had been fourth in Kelowna, British Columbia. But Ranger felt he could do better. “I knew I had the boat. I knew I had the engines. I knew I had the crew. It was just a matter of timing; getting my times down, which was all new to me. If you don’t think you can win, you better not set your ass in the seat because you’re just taking up space out in the water.”

Ranger would need that optimism. In Seattle, four different boats won preliminary heats, and the *Miss Budweiser*, *Miss Smirnoff*, *Harrah’s Club*, and *Wayfarers Club Lady* all finished with faster speeds than the *Gypsy*. But in the final, Bill Brow rolled the *Budweiser* and Ranger finished second after the restart. Ranger’s point total was enough for a first place trophy.

“I don’t know if it was anything special or if the cards just fell right, or if it was just our turn to win,” he says. “Brow would have won it in the *Budweiser*, except he flipped. I think the paper said ‘Oh my goodness, *My Gypsy* wins!’”

Although Seattle was his only race win, Ranger finished the year in second place overall, making him an easy selection as Rookie of the Year. But the decision to keep racing was not as easy. Ranger drove for part of the 1967 season before hiring driver Ed O’Halloran. Tommy Tucker Fults drove the boat in 1968. And, by the end of that third year, Ranger was done as an owner, too.

The toll had been great. During three years of racing from 1966 to 1968, six drivers had been killed.



Jim Ranger and *My Gypsy* crew accept the 1966 World Championship Trophy in Seattle.

Hydroplane and Raceboat Museum



Hydroplane racing was no longer a “safe sport”.

“I would like to have continued racing for years,” he says. “As it was, that didn’t happen. Too many people died. The thrill for the family just wasn’t there, because I was part of that family and I was a driver. The thrill wasn’t there (even) as an owner.”

Friends

Today, Jim Ranger is one of the few who can still remember what racing was like in the mid-1960s. With a quick wit and a mind as sharp as a propeller edge, he’s able to describe the boats and the strategies and the heats of racing. But it’s the people who really matter to him. You can hear it in his voice as he describes the men and women who introduced him to boat racing in 1966. People were a source of energy in what Ranger describes a family event.

“I think 1966 was one of the last years that hydroplane racing was more of a family association, and less of a racing association. If someone running an Allison needed a part, they just came into the van and got it.”

He remembers sharing meals with friends and crewmembers from the various teams. In 1966, the Ranger’s sponsored the first of three annual pool party events at the family compound in Grosse Pointe, Michigan.

“Pool parties were Yvonne’s idea,” he remembers. “We just had a Saturday get together, like in the south, where people would get together and have a dinner. That was our way of saying thanks for boat racing. People from Seattle and Spokane and Florida and New York. It was by invitation.

“Then on Sunday, we had 250 pounds of spare ribs and 500 pounds of chicken and beans and bread and dessert. The first ones

to come through the lines were the crews, because they had to eat. They were the ones that got the boats ready. Then the owners and drivers and their families, and anybody in the pits that wanted to eat would be welcome. We did that for three years.”

Ranger made many close friends during those early years, including “Uncle Bernie”.

“Bernie Little won a lot of races and a lot of people were envious of what he could do with the *Budweiser*, but when you look at the innovations that he brought into boat racing, he truly, truly made boat racing safe.

“When I raced, if you stuck the [boat’s] nose in or you hit a roller, or someone clipped you and you rolled over, you were dead. But with the capsules and oxygen and everything else, you’ve got to credit Bernie Little for that. I think he really doesn’t get his due in the history of boat racing.”

Looking Back

As Jim Ranger rolls back the clock to 1966, he sees himself as a lucky young man. “I consider myself a very, very, very lucky human being to have participated in the races. When you are young, you don’t stop and think about tomorrow. Tomorrow may not come. And if it don’t, at least you’ve lived for today. That’s being young and dumb, and that’s what I attribute it to. If I had been frightful or scared, I wouldn’t have done it.

“It was a phenomenal time in my life. I met a lot of great people and did something that not too many people can look at themselves in the mirror and say they’ve done.”

Around the Circuit

Race Site News



Chris Tracy

As the H1 Unlimited hydroplane series gears up for the 2016 season, here's a preview of what to expect.

H1.

Steve David returns as H1 chairman and U-11 co-owner, Shannon Raney, continues in her role as the Director of Administration.

Raney was selected by David because, as an owner, she understands and sees all facets of the sport.

Raney, who is a part-time H1 employee, noted that when the season begins others will step forward to lead various parts of H1 operations. Art Oberto made a financial donation to H1 earmarked for marketing and rebranding and a consultant has been employed for this project.

As I write this, all has not been finalized, but expect H1 to offer a Fan Club Package, likely to include a shirt, cold pit-passes, and more. As of early June, the Internet race coverage contract had not been finalized, but live Internet streaming is expected for each race. (Races in the Tri-Cities and Seattle will be broadcasted on TV in those local areas.)

Raney reports that the testing session on June 10 in the Tri-Cities and races in Madison, Detroit, Tri-Cities, Seattle and San Diego are "firm." (The Tri-Cities testing was a success with the U-1, U-5, U-9, U-18 and vintage Atlas running laps.) A testing session scheduled for Guntersville,

Alabama, has been canceled. The proposed race in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, has been pushed to the 2017 season, as sufficient sponsorship money was not secured for 2016.



No title sponsor for the series is anticipated for 2016, but it should be noted that Internet hits are important in promoting the sport to potential sponsors, so check the H1 Internet site often and be sure to "like" H1 on Facebook, too.

In 2015, H1 worked with the Grand Prix West (GPW) series and several GPW races are companions to the unlimited races in 2016. But, a wild card was recently introduced into this relationship when Sam Cole was appointed the leader of GPW. It remains to be seen if that partnership will continue or if the two organizations will go their separate ways.

RULES.

No major rule changes are expected for the 2016 season. Scott Raney, member of the H1 Competition Committee, reports that some of the rules will be tidied up a bit, but there will be "no competition rule changes." Raney noted that in 2016 drones are allowed instead of

helicopters, but noted that FAA rules or local race site preferences likely will result in helicopters being used at all race sites. One-way telemetry will be allowed in 2016, boat to shore, but no return.

RACE SITES.

The Madison (Indiana) Regatta opens the season July 1-3. H1 has said that

eight boats are expected



to attend

this fan-favorite race. Ellstrom will likely not attend, but Ted Porter has recently entered a second boat, the U-57, which will run in 2016 as the U-7. The Madison race has attracted a new title sponsor, MainSource Bank. Belterra Casino Resort is the presenting sponsor. WORX radio will provide live coverage.

After Madison, the boats head west to the Tri-Cities (Richland, Kennewick,

and Pasco) for the July 29-31, HAPO Columbia Cup. The



HAPO Com-

munity Credit Union returns as the title sponsor. HAPO stands for Hanford Atomic Products Operations.

H1 honored the Tri-Cities race in 2015 as the Race Site of the Year. No wonder. One owner told me that this race site provides tremendous support for race teams. A

robust air show, also sponsored by HAPO, is a companion to the hydroplane race. The Grand Prix West and 5-litre boats will race, as well. Vintage boats will conduct an exhibition, too. Expect live radio coverage on KONA Radio and live race-day coverage on KNDU-TV.

The next weekend, August 5-7, the boats head to the Albert Lee Appliance Cup at Seafair in Seattle. Live race-day radio on KKNW and live race-day TV

on KIRO is featured. The long log boom with huge numbers of boats anchored outside the racecourse is unique to this race. The Blue Angels are



featured in the companion air show that is sponsored by Boeing.

In addition to unlimited racing, some boats from the F-1 Prop Tour will be racing at Seafair—as others will be racing the same date on the East Coast—and the Grand Prix West boats will race, too. Pretty much there is all-new leadership at Seafair this year, but veteran volunteers will be there to help.

The boats head back east as the Gold Cup race returns to Detroit on August 26-28 for Detroit's 100th anniversary celebration. The United Auto Workers (UAW)-General Motors (GM)



return for the second year to sponsor. This year, the long

title to the event is the APBA Gold Cup, UAW-GM Hydrofest. New this year is Free Friday, where fans get free admission to the grandstand and cold pits starting at 1 p.m.

September 16-18 is San Diego Bayfair. Located on Mission Bay, this will

be the only race on salt water this season and features a 2.5-mile

racecourse for the unlimited boats. Expect many other classes of boats to race, as well, including the Grand Prix West boats.



Guntersville will be back on H1 schedule.

The unlimited hydroplanes will be racing on Lake Guntersville, Alabama, according to an agreement reached between H1 Unlimited and the Convention and Visitors Bureau of Marshall County. The H1 boats will run a test session on the lake in 2017 and will follow that with a full-fledged national high point race in 2018.

"Guntersville is ready and excited to bring unlimited hydroplanes back to Guntersville," said Katy Norton, president of the Convention and Visitors Bureau. "The bureau believes the race could be an economic impact event, delivering upwards of 50,000 fans to Marshall County."

"Ted Grange of H1 has been working tirelessly to add races to our schedule," said H1 Chairman Steve David, "and now with the help of Milt and Charley Wiggins,

Mayor Leigh Dollar, Katy, one site is now on the books. I am excited we are taking our sport to another region of our country and a segment of fans that love motor-sports. It also gives H1 another race east of the Mississippi and before the traditional Madison race early in July."

The test session will be held on June 10 next year and the race has been scheduled for June 21 through 24, 2018.

Charley Wiggins, the owner of the U-27 hydroplane, which is based in Rainbow City, Alabama, said Lake Guntersville is nearly perfect for the race. "Ever since I was racing here in the '80s, I've been to a lot of courses around the country and this is some of the best water in the country to race on," he said.

"Our family has lived in Alabama for at least four generations and we have been racing boats for seven decades," Wiggins said. "We have a passion for our state and racing and we want to show our fans these exciting racing machines and the world beautiful Lake Guntersville."

In 1962, Guntersville was the site of a world's straightaway speed record run by Roy Doby and the *Miss U.S. I* that established a mark of 200.419 miles per hour that stood for 38 years. A year later, the lake was the site of the first running of the Dixie Cup, an event that was the season opener the following three years and again in 1969.

"I don't know if we will set any records," said David. "I do know we will bring a great event to Guntersville."

HydroFile

Race Team News



Lon Erickson

U-1 Miss HomeStreet Bank

After a hectic spring with some changes and a re-focused team led by Dan Hoover, the U-1 went through the paces at a successful testing session on the Columbia River in Tri-Cities. In addition, Jimmy Shane and boat made some appearances at HomeStreet bank locations in Washington.



Miss Madison Race Team

U-5 Porter Racing

Porter Racing shuffled its team of boats they will be racing this year. This year's U-5 *Graham Trucking* will be the hull that ran last year as the U-7 *Graham Trucking II* (hull #9712 – former Bud T-5). J. Michael Kelly will be driving. The team repainted the hull and will be using the best of their equipment combined from their two-boat team last year. They brought the hull out west to the testing session to give JMK and the team an opportunity to “dial it in” and make adjustments for the season [below]. After the testing, they feel they made the right adjustments and were pleased with the results. Last year's U-5 race boat (hull #0001- former Bud T-6) has not been repaired from the truck-stop incident last year and is in need of significant rebuild from years of racing. In late-breaking news, the team has announced that it will run the old U-57 hull at Madison with Jeff Bernard at the wheel. The boat [bottom] was built in 1990 as the *Winston Eagle* and last raced in 2013 as *FEDCO*. Other changes of racing hulls are possible, but not determined at this time.

U-3 Go3 Racing

Ed Cooper and team continued work on rebuilding some minor inner structure of the hull, routine updates caused by the normal wear and tear of racing. A refresh of the red “Turbinator” paint job was also completed. They continue the sponsor search and are hopeful for racing this year with some past sponsors returning and new ones coming on board.



Go3 Racing



Lon Erickson



Lon Erickson

U-9 Les Schwab/Sound Propeller

Jeff Campbell and crew made a few minor changes, giving the U-9 a little bit different look, and got Andrew Tate some good testing time in the Tri-Cities session. The next step will be getting Andrew qualified as an H1 driver in Madison.



Lon Erickson

U-11 URG/Miss Peters & May

The U-11 team did a refresh on the colors of the brightly colored *Peters & May* hull and have a complete compliment of rebuilt engines to start the season.



Scott Raney



Scott Raney

U-14 Centurion Racing

At the H1 season preview, owner Jay Leckrone announced the U-14 will race in 2016. His plans are to compete in Tri-Cities, Seattle, and Detroit with a possibility of San Diego. David Warren returns as driver. They are pursuing sponsorship for the season.

U-16/96 Ellstrom Racing

There has been no specific news coming from the Ellstrom team this spring about their plans for 2016. Mike Hanson has completed off-season maintenance and reports indicate the hull has been refreshed with a basic white paint scheme, but no details. Last year's driver Jean Theoret was interviewed recently in a Canadian newspaper telling them the team would only race in Seattle and he would be back in the driver's seat.

U-18 Bucket List Racing

Kelly Stocklin and his crew completed the major rebuild of the U-18 over the winter and made the Tri-Cities testing, pulling into town with a gray-primered hull [below], but ready to go test. After Kelly made an initial shakedown run testing systems, a switch of the fuel system, he then put former GP driver and H1 rookie Dustin Echols in the boat for his first unlimited ride [bottom]. The U-18 plans to race in Tri-Cities and Seattle for the 2016 season.



Lon Erickson



Lon Erickson

U-21 Go Fast Turn Left Racing

The O'Farrell team has wrapped up preparation of the U-21 hull and sports a new paint scheme for Madison and Tri-Cities sponsor Darrell Strong presents PayneWest Insurance. They also have plans to bring more video/telemetry to the fans through onboard video.



Go Fast Turn Left Racing



Go Fast Turn Left Racing

U-27 Wiggins Racing

Wiggins Racing announced they have picked up the DiJulio sponsorship for the Northwest races in Washington. This past month they also made an appearance at Lake Gunterville promoting the announcement of an agreement to race there in 2018, with a testing session planned for 2017.

U-99.9 Leland Unlimited

Driver Kevin Eacret and the crew are busy in the race shop getting the CARSTAR powered by Miss Rock hull ready to go for Madison. KISW has teamed up with CARSTAR to sponsor the 2015 U-100 hull, which is renumbered as the U-99.9, the same number Leland boats carried back in the '80s and '90s as Miss Rock. It will have the familiar black, red, yellow paint scheme it was known for, along with CARSTAR graphics.



Lon Erickson

NEXT MEETING OF UNLIMITEDS UNANIMOUS

Sunday, July 10, 2016
Meeting starts at 2 p.m.

Bellevue Public Library, Room 3
1111 - 110th Ave. NE
Bellevue, Washington 98004

YOU ARE WELCOME TO ATTEND!



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