



UNLIMITED NEWSJOURNAL

A Chronicle of Speed

TIME CAPSULE: Stepping into the way-back machine.

The sport of unlimited hydroplane racing has a long illustrious history that goes back some 114 years. During that time, boats have evolved from standard runabouts, to step hulls, to prop riders, and from speeds of 20 mph to almost 200 mph. Each spring, we like to look back at our history to see what happened at various milestone distances from today. So lets take a look at what the sport was doing 100, 75, 50, and 25 years ago.

100 YEARS AGO

The 1917 Season:

America was at war when the hydroplanes raced in 1917. After years of trying to stay neutral, the United States had entered World War I in the spring and, as the boats raced that following summer, the most pressing thing on the minds of most people was the effort to mobilize for battle in Europe.

There was boatracing, however. While nobody could know it at the time, it was a landmark year, in fact, because it marked the first season that the legendary Gar Wood competed for the Gold Cup.

Two years earlier, a group of Detroit business people had formed an association that sent a boat named *Miss Detroit* to Manhasset Bay, New York, where it won the 1915 Gold Cup. That meant the 1916 race was held on the Detroit River, the first in a tradition of races in the Motor City that continues to this day.

Unfortunately for the Detroit race fans, their first experience hosting the prestigious race ended with the *Miss Minneapolis* winning the trophy, which meant that the 1917 race would be held on the upper reaches of the Mississippi River in the Twin Cities. In addition, when that first Detroit race ended, the millionaire Gar Wood came upon the scene to purchase the *Miss Detroit* and, in



Gar Wood

Algonak-Clay Township Historical Society and Museum

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by Andy Muntz
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the process, strike a partnership agreement with the boat's builder, Chris Smith.

Wood's first task in preparation for the 1917 season was to ask Smith to build him a new boat that

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My \$0.02 Worth

Editorial Comment



Andy
Muntz

In 1903, in what was one of the first organized powerboat races in history, Campbell Muir and Dorothy Levitt piloted a boat named *Napier I* up and down the River Lee in Queenstown Harbor, Ireland, to win the British International Trophy. But, the course was placed in such a way that very few people actually witnessed their effort. A correspondent for *Yachting World* called it “the direst fiasco as a spectator event.”

Now, 114 years later, attracting spectators is a struggle again.

In the early days of the sport, the boats were being raced mainly for the enjoyment of their millionaire owners and their rich buddies at the yacht club. Although they appreciated that somebody might enjoy watching them race, attracting fans to the events took a back seat to other more pressing concerns, such as the fairness of the rules and other technical matters.

That attitude also was apparent in how boat owners viewed commercialism. For about half of

the sport’s history, it was a serious breach of etiquette to christen your boat with the name of a product. Zalmon Simmons never would have considered calling his boat the Simmons Beautyrest Special and it likely never occurred to Lord Charles Wakefield that he might call his boat Miss Castrol. Instead, they gave their boats pet names such as *My Sin* and *Miss England*, respectively.

Then everything changed. The federal tax court ruled in 1963 that the cost of sponsoring a hydroplane was a legitimate advertising expense. Suddenly, sponsors became a critical component in the entire financial structure of the sport and it became clear that sponsors view the sport differently than owners.

They don’t see a hydroplane as a personal plaything. They see hydroplanes as floating billboards. They want the name that’s painted on the side of the boat to be seen by as many people as possible.

In other words, they wanted

something that those racers of a hundred years ago never thought about. They wanted butts sitting on the beach.

But lately, that has become a challenge. In this month’s issue we learn that viewership for the Seattle race has dropped to the point where it no longer makes sense to broadcast the event live. In the past few months, we’ve read how the event organizers at Madison admitted they can only afford a four-boat race and how attendance at Detroit has been an issue.

The owners who make the decisions simply can’t fall into the trap of thinking that since they pay the bills, they should be able to organize the sport to their liking. The sport is different now than it was a hundred years ago. What’s best for the owners is not necessarily what’s best for attracting fans. With the sport’s survival now at stake, the latter must trump the former, not the other way around.

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Letters may be edited for clarity and space.

Detroit has new title sponsor for August races.

The organizers of the Spirit of Detroit HydroFest have announced that the Metro Detroit Chevy Dealers will be the title sponsor for this year's event, which will be held on the Detroit River in August. The

event will be restructured this year to include two different races in two days instead of one race over two days.

"We are excited to welcome the Metro Detroit Chevy Dealers

as a partner for one of the greatest community events in the City of Detroit," said Mark Weber, president of Detroit Riverfront Events, the organization that plans the race.

The new format this year will include two sets of preliminary heats and a winner-take-all final on Saturday for the President's Cup. That will be followed the following day by three sets of preliminary heats and another winner-take-all final for the Gold Cup.

"That gives us 12 sets of unlimited hydroplane heat races with more action for race goers," said Weber.

The unlimiteds raced for the President's Cup between 1926 and 1977, with the trophy being an APBA inboard event for several years since. The Gold Cup is the oldest active trophy in all of motorsports, having been first awarded in 1904.

Live TV coverage of Seattle race may end after 66 years.

There is a very strong chance that for the first time in the 66-year history of hydroplane racing in Seattle, this summer's race will likely not be broadcast live to viewers in the Pacific Northwest.

Greg Bilde, general manager of KIRO-TV, said his station has yet to sign a contract with Seafair, but unless something unforeseen happens, they will plan to instead offer a 90-minute special about the race that will be broadcasted the evening of the event.

The problem, according to KIRO, is ratings. The average

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We love to hear from our readers.

Nice job on the Ibsen interview and Muntz's Slo-mo overview is nicely done.

The Slo-mo story is still close to my heart and you may recall that I wrote several articles years ago on the topic. In fact, that first article that appeared in MotorBoat was written when I was 19, a college sophomore. Along the way, there were, I think, four other articles published in various places.

The problem with unlimited racing today (or one of them) is that the racing no longer tells a story, as it did in the 1950s. The Seattle-Detroit rivalry had a lot to do with that, of course, as did the right of the Gold Cup winner to name the subsequent year's contest. And although Seattle had no major-league sports at the time, Detroit certainly did and boatracing remained popular for many years. I think the unlimiteds did it to themselves with incompetent leadership and unimaginative management with a mistaken focus on keeping boat owners happy and ignoring development of a fan base.

Small race fields and uncompetitive racing killed crowd appeal; I think the leadership knew that but they had no political will or creative imagination to somehow make the unlimiteds more compelling and persons who proposed big changes were ignored "because we've never done it that way." The other mistake the old URC made was to promote owners' personalities instead of the drivers; the Bernie Show collapsed when he finally cashed in his chips. (Speaking of chips, Hanauer is one of the drivers who should have been promoted to the hilt—articulate, good looking, gutsy, etc.)

The unlimiteds lost its audience as they grew older and more discerning, and I was one of them. Today, I suspect only the young beer drinkers remain—and Bernie Little encouraged that transition from a compelling contest on water to what anthropologists call an obscenity rite, the drunken summer festival after the harvest, which are common in primitive cultures (which includes college fraternities and sororities).

Weldon Johnson

The 2017 H1 Season

Testing in the Tri-Cities, Washington	June 2
Testing in Guntersville, Alabama	June 17
Race in Madison, Indiana	June 30 to July 2
Race in the Tri-Cities, Washington.....	July 28 to 30
Race in Seattle, Washington	August 4 to 6
Race in Detroit, Michigan	August 25 to 27
Race in San Diego, California	September 15 to 17

A conversation with Don Ibsen, last surviving member of the Slo-mo team: Part Two

Last month, in part one, Don Ibsen told us how he became a member of the Slo-mo-shun crew when he was a teenager. He discussed his duties on the crew and reviewed some famous incidents in unlimited hydroplane racing during the early 1950s. This month, in part two, Ibsen talks about the flip of Slo-mo-shun V in 1955, the crash of Slo-mo-shun IV in 1956, and the team's move to crew the Hawaii Ka'i III. The interview was conducted by Craig Fjarlie and Bob Senior at Ibsen's home on October 7, 2016.

Let's talk about 1955. Before the '55 Gold Cup, there was a report that Marion Cooper was being considered as driver of Slo-mo IV.

Yup.

Was he called, or approached?

He was called.

Taggart was maybe not interested?

Well, I think it was who was first available, maybe. But, Marion Cooper was also a good limited driver.

Yeah, yeah.

I'm trying to think if he even came out. He may've come out and was just there for a day and then gone. I remember the name came up. He was never made part of the, never came through.

In '55, Referee Mel Crook banned the flying start under the floating bridge.

It was too dangerous.

Let's talk about when Slo-mo V flipped while qualifying for the Gold Cup.

OK.

Donnie Benson, the son of Al Benson, tested the boat when it was repaired from the flip and was named Miss Seattle. He said the crew put a red line on the speedometer at 140 mph. Don't go over that because the boat would get too light and could go over again. Was there a concern like that when it was Slo-mo V?

There was a concern, but that was over 140.

It was going way faster than that when it flipped.

It was over 140, I can tell you that. We knew the boat tended to get flighty, OK? A lot of things can cause that and the air spoiler under the nose on the IV and V weren't the same. The IV was a lot deeper, for one thing, and it was shaped a little bit different. Plus, the V was a slightly lighter boat and a slightly wider boat. But, I remember when we were having trouble getting a little flighty. What the crew did is they took quarter-round molding that was probably one-inch quarter-round and we would wrap it across the bow of the boat in about three places. That was

supposed to break up the airflow because we thought there was too much airflow over the top. Now, I don't recall that helped anything, OK?

May have made it worse.

It may have made it worse. Slo-mo IV and Hawaii Ka'i, as a matter of fact, had the same characteristic in straightaway runs and all. I can remember sitting out there with Hawaii Ka'i in that run right there, looking at the picture, you can see with this long run that Jack is going, he's coming at us and going by us and you could see at about 175 the boat would literally kick, like that (gestures). It would notch, like that. It was like, wow, this thing is gluing itself down to the water. Slo-mo IV was the same thing. Now you got a vacuum behind that spoiler. And that vacuum, the faster you go the more it becomes a vacuum and it's suckin' the boat down, you know?

At Seafair a few years ago, Regas was telling a group of people he was worried he was going to stuff the bow before he got through the trap.

Well, the good news about that is the prop's coming out of the water,



The *Slo-mo-shun V* being towed back to the pits after it's flip in 1955.

so you're losing prop, you know? It'd take quite a bit to get the nose down. Of course, once the nose touches it's gonna grab it on the spoiler. But getting back to *Slo-mo V*, *Slo-mo V* didn't have that characteristic. Of course, as we all know, when it was *Miss Seattle* they were testing one time and it got light.

Was Chuck Hickling driving it then?

I think so, yeah.

Where were you when Fageol flipped it?

I was in a crew boat. Actually, it was Doc Lonsbury's. It was a Chris Craft. They had a particular name for that. I think it was an A boat, but it was quite a large runabout. I can remember being out there. Lou is coming down the backstretch and *Slo-mo* does the flip. And Lonsbury, it's his boat and he's sitting behind the wheel, and he froze. He froze right there. One of the crew guys pushed him aside, got behind the wheel and headed out. Fageol hooked onto the boat right away and all that, but boy, you talk about a horrific thing. You were right there. Of course, the patrol boat got Fageol. I can't remember,

was his back where he had the most bodily damage? Seems to me it was his back. What is interesting, you watch that, you can't even see him come out of the boat. The films I've watched, you don't just see this guy dropping out, but he did. The boat was literally upside down. At that point he said, "I'm outa here." He pushed out, he hit the water. Of course the boat, you know, continued on. You can see the splash in the water. You don't see him so much, you see the splash in the water.

Bill O'Mara, on KING-TV, was saying, "Do you see Lou, do you see Lou?"

Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah.

After the flip was the boat taken directly to Jensen's shop?

Yes, almost the same thing, it was almost a repeat of towing it back down the canal. [See part one of the interview about the 1953 incident when *Slo-mo V* was damaged after breaking a propeller – Ed.] The stern was banged out of it, you know. It hit so hard that it just blew a bunch of wood out of the transom.

So it was going to sink if they didn't...

Exactly.

In the '55 Gold Cup, Joe Taggart was unable to finish the final heat in *Slo-mo IV*. He had an engine problem with two laps to go and shut it off. Had a stack fire.

That was, probably, the blower blew. That's usually what's indicative of that.

Could he have finished?

Uh, probably not.

Was there any criticism of him for shutting it off?

Well, save the boat maybe, you know? Try to finish, he wasn't gonna win. You're gonna finish the race. I think it was, you know, he was smart enough to know whether you want to limp around or not. I can't honestly tell you right now whether we blew a piston, rod, or blower. But when you see a stack



Joe Taggart

fire, you got too much fuel, OK? The ratio of fuel to air wasn't proper, let's put it that way. Too much fuel.

So Schoenith wins the Gold Cup on bonus points. That got rid of that rule.

Yeah, yeah.

This winner-take-all really made hydroplane racing good stuff. You gotta win the final heat.

Yeah.

Perhaps we can move ahead to '56.

OK.

Did Mr. Sayres find it was too expensive or complicated to run two boats after several years?

Never heard that.

Just speculation.

Never heard that. I remember down at KING-TV in the studio they had this big, you know, "Send in money for *Slo-mo IV*" spot.

Names in the P-I [newspaper] for days; a list of donors.

Yeah, so that was part of the financing of the boats, 'cause there was this question of can we afford to run both boats and all that. But, no, I never heard anything about, you know, he's gonna sell one. Never heard that.

Well, in '56 they just had the IV. The V had been sold after the flip and was *Miss Seattle*. *Shanty I* won the Seafair race.



Bob Carver

The *Slo-mo-shun IV* at the 1955 Gold Cup on Lake Washington.

Right.

***Slo-mo IV* had a problem in the final heat. Coming out of the first turn it kind of sputtered and got going, but by then he was too far behind.**

I'm trying to think what the heck that would've been, if he took in water.

He may've gotten wet-down.

From a roostertail, water. That's typical and then when you finally clear it out, why, you're way behind.

Yeah, your chances of winning are pretty well gone.

I'm trying to think if there was a, you know, like he got spun sideways a little bit or something, and then straightened out and that did it, but I have a feeling that it was probably more a fuel problem, water-fuel.

There was a newspaper photo of the boat at really slow speed, the caption, "The IV had sputtered and

was almost stopped." Then he got going again. Finished second.

That sounds like water to me. We used to have this thing on the intake where you could close it. I mean, it wouldn't close totally. It would just bring the air up here, but it was straight in, you know, the scoop on the front.

Well, to move on in '56, you did not go to the Gold Cup in Detroit.

No.

***Slo-mo IV* crashed in a test run before the race.**

I was actually working at Sayres' place in Seattle. I was on my way to work when I heard about it. It just came in the radio, 7:30 in the morning probably. *Slo-mo IV* was testing, blah, blah, blah, and was destroyed on the river. That's the first time I heard about it.

On the radio.

I've got pictures from the paper of it and all. Then, here again, my dad

with a 16mm camera went down there and got pictures. KING-TV, in front of KING-TV. He got films of that and that's in the archives, too, with the museum and all. In fact, my dad came to Sayres' funeral, which was just a few weeks later, and he's got the crypt going into the wall and the whole thing. That's all my dad's footage.

So at the Gold Cup, or right after, the Slo-mo crew moved over to the *Hawaii Ka'i III*.

Correct.

Did they do that at Detroit, or did it really happen later like at the President's Cup?

No, happened at Detroit. What's interesting about that, the *Scooter Too* trailer, which was Kaiser's boat, was the trailer used to bring *Slo-mo IV* back to Seattle. Right there at the Gold Cup is where the transition took place.

And they converted it from Allison to Rolls.

Rolls, yeah.

Where was that done?

Well, I wasn't physically there, but my guess, it was done in the Chrysler boat well, which was on the river there in Detroit.

In Detroit, but after the Gold Cup.

Yes.

Did any of Kaiser's crew stay on and work with them?

There was one crewmember that stayed on. I think he's the only crewmember that stayed on. He's down for one year, not '58. He was there early on. Ollie Meek.

Oh, Ollie Meek. OK. He was Stan Dollar's riding mechanic.

Yeah.

You get involved with boat racing, it can be a magnet.

Yeah.

Kaiser got Merlins from Sayres.

Initially, yeah.

Do you know how many he got?

I'm not gonna say how many came from Sayres and how many he got elsewhere. The numbers are hard to know. I wasn't in the background buying engines.

Was it pretty certain after *Slo-mo IV* was wrecked in Detroit that Sayres was done?

No, I think, uh, his death was the final nail, if you want to call it that.

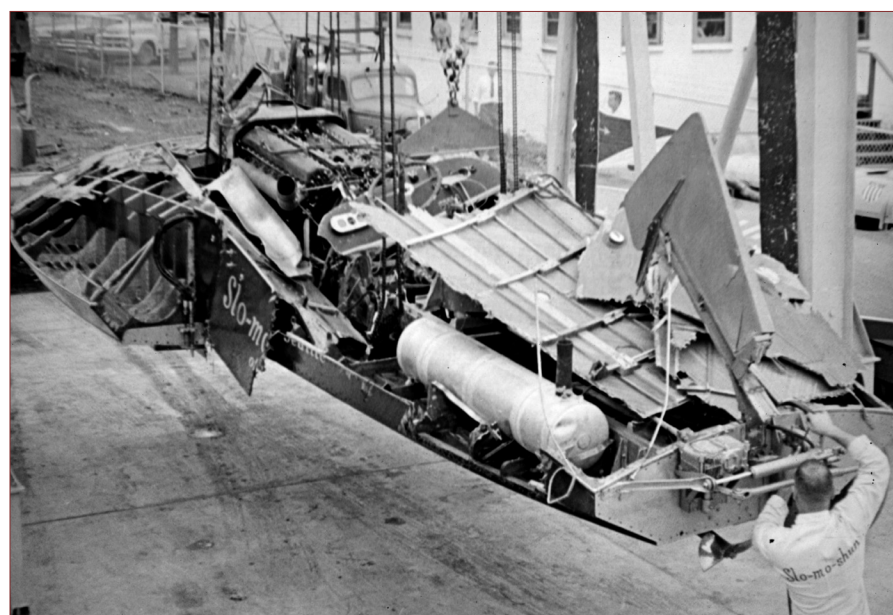
If he had lived, he might have built another boat?

Well, speculation. Again, personalities and his wife is probably involved at this point, you know. They were getting along in years. Actually, he was 60, I think. She might've had something to say about it and he may have been to a point where, "Honey, I agree," had he lived. He might have said, "You know, we've got a beautiful home here. We've done all we can in the unlimited scene. Let's shift over." You know, that kind of thing.

Well, *Hawaii Ka'i III* won the Rogers Memorial after the President's Cup. Was that the first indication that some success was going to transfer over to that boat?

Oh, absolutely. Well, the *Ka'i* we had was not the original *Ka'i* that went over in Honolulu.

That was the first one. Kenny St. Oegger blew it over trying for the



The wreckage of the *Slo-mo-shun IV* after its accident in Detroit in 1956.



Race fans viewing the remains of the *Slo-mo IV* after its return to Seattle.

mile record, Kehei Lagoon, near the Honolulu airport.

I've got the *Honolulu Times* paper that shows all that. It shows the boat sideways.

Ready to go completely over.

Yeah, yeah.

Do you know, did Jack Regas ever drive the first *Ka'i*?

I wouldn't be surprised but what he did, for testing, if nothing else.

At the end of the '56 season, Jack Regas drove *Miss Wayne* through a mile trap.

Uh, yeah. What year?

'56.

I don't know anything about that particular run, I really don't. I know the *Miss Wayne*.

What was the source of the propellers used on *Hawaii Ka'i III*?

Stannus.

That's where they got them?

Yeah. That's silicone bronze.

Ah, OK.

That's a Hi J, got the Hi J stamped on it, prop number and the whole thing. I got a list out there (points to garage) all the *Slo-mo* prop numbers. That was our break-in engine prop.

For the *Ka'i* or *Slo-mo*?

Slo-mo.

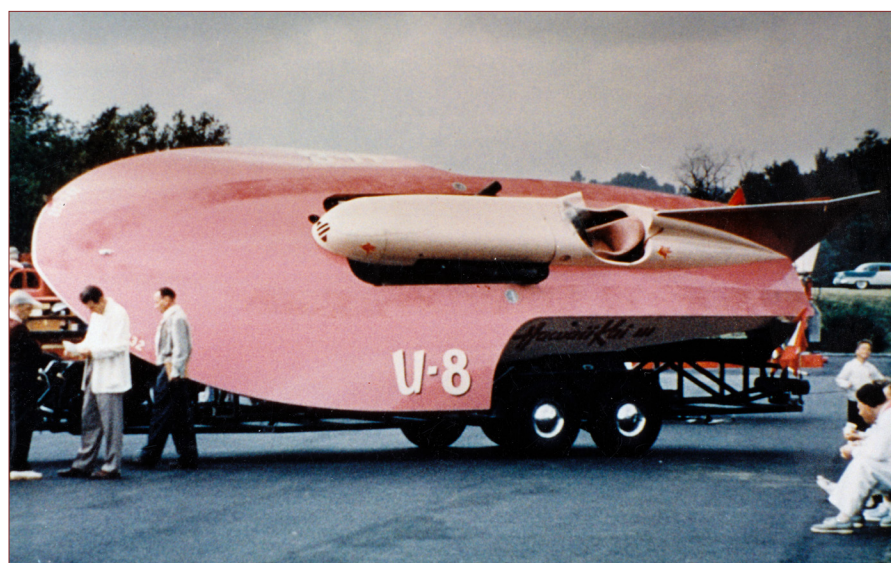
***Slo-mo*, OK.**

Never used that for a race, but, uh (pause). You look at those now and you think, silicone bronze and now they're breaking blades on stainless steel, how the hell did those things last? Well, they didn't you know, you had to keep die checking, die checking, die checking. Get better ones, you know.

Every time they ran.

Yeah.

Next month, in the third and final installment of this interview, Ibsen will talk more about his experiences as a member of the Hawaii Ka'i crew and his time with the Miss Bardahl crew.



The Hawaii Ka'i III became the new home for the Slo-mo crew after the IV was destroyed.

Stepping into the way-back machine.

Continued from page 1

was stronger and lighter than the *Miss Minneapolis* (another Chris Smith creation) and powered by the same eight-cylinder Sterling engine that was in the *Miss Detroit*. The new boat was christened *Miss Detroit II*.

Its first appearance was at the Thousand Islands Challenge Trophy at Alexandria Bay on the St. Lawrence River in Upstate New York. There, Wood had an easy romp over some of the leading boats of the day, such as *Peter Pan* and *Hawkeye II*, which was campaigned by Albert L. Judson, the president of the American Power Boat Association.

Two weeks later, Wood and the *Miss Detroit II* were in Minneapolis for the Gold Cup. In the days leading up to the race, the other entries suffered a series of mishaps that seemed to give Wood an obvious advantage.

Two of the four boats at the event, both owned by Albert Judson, were essentially eliminated before the race had started. The *Hawkeye II* ran over a submerged

log, which bent the prop shaft and twisted the propeller, while his newest entry, *Whip-po Will Jr.*, capsized during a test run just before the first day of racing.

That left only Wood's *Miss Detroit II* and the hometown favorite and defending champion, the *Miss Minneapolis*, which had been fitted with an airplane engine that was more powerful and much lighter than the engine it used the year before. On the day before the race, however, something failed in the crankcase of that new engine and sent parts exploding in all directions. The crew then had no choice but to plunk the old engine back into the boat.

It turned out not to be much of a threat to *Miss Detroit*. With Gar Wood in the driver's seat, the boat lapped the struggling *Miss Minneapolis* on the first day of competition and followed that with easy victories on both the second and third days. Then, to prove just how fast his boat was, Wood ran *Miss Detroit II* through a mile straightaway course the day after the Gold Cup and set a record with

a mark of 61.723 mph.

Gar Wood returned to Detroit a hero. He not only had the Gold Cup, but had the world's speed record, too.

75 YEARS AGO

The 1942 Season:

With America's entry into World War II the previous December, all racing activity was canceled during the duration of the conflict. The only activity related to unlimited hydroplane racing was the operation of the fighter plane engines that would eventually power the boats after the war was over. In the summer of 1942, therefore, the future of hydroplane racing was in the Allison engines that powered the P-40 Tomahawks that the Flying Tigers used against the Japanese until the group was disbanded in June, or in the Rolls-Merlin engines that powered the British Hawker Hurricanes that were involved in the Battle of Alam el Hafta in Egypt at about the time a 1942 Gold Cup race would have been held.

50 YEARS AGO

The 1967 Season:

Perhaps the most tragic unlimited racing campaign had occurred the year before when the sport suffered the loss of four of its drivers, three in one day. Despite the tumultuous 1966 season, there emerged a sense of optimism about hydroplane



The *Miss Detroit II*, winner of the 1917 Gold Cup with Gar Wood driving



Sandy Ross Collection

racing as the fleet gathered at the shore of Tampa Bay to start the 1967 campaign.

Though he initially thought he might quit the sport after the death of his driver Ron Musson the year before, Ole Bardahl returned with a new *Miss Bardahl* that was designed



Hydroplane and Raceboat Museum

[Above left] Billy Schumacher, driver of the *Miss Bardahl* in 1967 and winner of the national title. [Above] The *Miss Bardahl* leaving the dock at the Tri-Cities in 1967.

by Ed Karelsen and that abandoned the team's traditional all-green paint scheme in favor of yellow. Despite the loss of her boat and the

death of driver Rex Manchester, Shirley Mendelson McDonald also was back with a new *Notre Dame*. Bill Harrah brought back his defending champion, which was renamed *Harrah's Club*, and Bernie Little returned with the *Miss Budweiser* that had completed the previous year's campaign after the death of Don Wilson.

Budweiser's new driver, Bill Brow, felt he was in an excellent position to win a few races and make a run at the national title as the boat tested excellently before the Suncoast Cup, but then tragedy struck again on the first lap of the year's first heat when the *Budweiser* rose into the air, barrel-rolled three times, and hit the water so cleanly that it barely caused a splash. Brow suffered injuries severe enough that he was pronounced dead two hours later.

With Billy Schumacher at the controls, the *Bardahl* became the season's most dominant performer, winning the race in Tampa as well as contests in Madison, Indiana; the Tri-Cities; the Gold Cup in Seattle; Sacramento; and San Diego. Only a dismal performance in Detroit and a second-place finish in Kelowna,



Sandy Ross Collection



Sandy Ross Collection

[Top] Bill Brow in the cockpit of the *Miss Budweiser*. [Above] Bill Sterett waves to the crowd after winning the 1967 Spirit of Detroit World Championship in *Miss Chrysler Crew*.

British Columbia, marred an otherwise perfect season.

Finishing second in the national standings was the automotive-engine-powered *Miss Chrysler Crew*, which was driven by Bill Sterett and Mira Slovak. The boat won the Spirit of Detroit Regatta, a second-place finish in the Atomic Cup, and a third in Sacramento. Placing third in the standings was the new bob-tailed *Miss U.S.* with Bill Muncey driving, and fourth was the *My Gypsy* with Jim Ranger and Ed O'Halloran sharing the duties.

25 YEARS AGO

The 1992 Season:

The 1992 season result was essentially decided the previous December when Bernie Little signed Chip Hanauer to be his driver. While at the controls of boats such as the *Atlas Van Lines* and *Miss Circus Circus*, Hanauer had always been the chief nemesis to Little's Budweiser team, and a driver that Little coveted for his own.



Jim Vota

The older of the two Budweiser boats, known as T-2, won four of the seven race victories collected by the team in 1992.

He had asked Hanauer to be his driver once before when William Bennett decided to sell his Circus team after the 1990 season, but Hanauer had turned him down. Instead, he tried his hand at auto racing. But, Little's powers of persuasion were very strong, and by the start of the 1992 campaign, Hanauer was wearing the colors of the Budweiser organization.

With Hanauer aboard, the Budweiser seemed invincible. Making it more so was the fact that the team showed up at every event with two boats. Sometimes

the older T-2 boat (hull #8701) was best suited for the course and was selected to compete, and sometimes the T-3 (hull #8901) performed better. The fact that they had a choice gave them a distinct advantage, which resulted in the Budweiser winning the national points standings in convincing fashion. One boat or the other won seven of the nine races held.

Bill Wurster might have had the year's most surprising entry. With George Woods at the controls, the *Tide* managed runner-up finishes in three of the five races leading up to



Rick Sullivan



Hydroplane and Raceboat Museum

[Left] Chip Hanauer, driver of the *Miss Budweiser*. [Right] The Budweiser race team brought two boats to every race in 1992 then on race day selected the one that had performed the best in qualifying or that was best suited for the race course



[Top] Bill Wurster's *Tide* pleased the hometown crowd when it won the Rainier Cup in Seattle. [Above] The brand-new *Coor's Dry* was the winner in San Diego and gave driver Dave Villwock his first career victory. The boat still races today as the U-9.

the Seattle event, where the team enjoyed a victory that proved very popular with the hometown fans.

The problems for *Budweiser* began when the T-3 hull flipped during a test run on Lake Washington, so Scott Pierce was pressed into service to handle their T-2 boat. In the final heat, Mark Tate drove the *Winston Eagle* into the lead until one of its canard wings failed and it was passed by Pierce.

But, Woods stayed close behind for three laps, closing on him with each lap. Then moved into the lead when Pierce hit a buoy in the south turn. Then it was Pierce's turn to press from the inside, but it was too late. Woods maintained his boat speed in the outer lane and crossed the finish line first in what was one of the more exciting final heats in many years.

Another notable competitor in

1992 was the brand-new *Coor's Dry*, an innovative carbon-composite design by Ron Jones that stunned the race fans in San Diego. The *Budweiser* blew over again in the day's first heat, which meant an opportunity for the others. But, one by one, they fell by the wayside. The *Winston Eagle* hit a buoy and the *Tide* developed steering problems, which allowed the *Coor's Dry* and its driver Dave Villwock to claim the victory.

It was the first race victory for Villwock, who would go on to collect a total of 67, the most victories by any unlimited hydroplane driver in the history of the sport. By the way, the *Coor's Dry* hull is still racing. It won last year's Seafair Race as the U-9 *Les Schwab*, finished third in the final standings, and will be among the favorites during the 2017 campaign.

Live TV coverage of Seattle race may not happen.

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rating for the live coverage was 2.3 percent of the 1.8 million adults in Western Washington who are between the ages of 25 and 54, the audience most coveted by the station's advertisers. Doing the math, that's only 41,400 people.

According to Bille, the 90-minute special during prime time, which would pre-empt the highly rated *60 Minutes*, would give the hydroplanes a better showcase. Based on figures for the past three years, he estimates that the early-evening time slot would draw about 70 percent more viewers from that important 25-54 age group than the live broadcast in the afternoon.

NEXT MEETING OF UNLIMITEDS UNANIMOUS

2 p.m., Sunday, May 21, 2017

Kingsgate Public Library
12507 NE 144th Street, Kirkland, Washington 99034

YOU ARE WELCOME TO ATTEND!