

DECEMBER 2011



An Evening With Dorothy and Art Oberto

*By Chris Tracy
Photos from Jayne Tracy*



Dorothy and Art Oberto were planning to move from their long-time south Seattle home on the shores on Lake Washington to an upscale retirement community in downtown Seattle. The Obertos are well known for their hospitality and for their one-of-a-kind home, being part museum and part carnival fun house. Also, the Obertos are supporters of the Hydroplane and Raceboat Museum (H&RM) and I was confident that they would offer to host dinner at their home, one final time, as an auction item at the 2009 H&RM benefit gala. My wife, Jayne, and I decided that an opportunity to have dinner with the Obertos and see their home before they moved was something not be missed, and vowed to bid for the opportunity. Sure enough, they offered dinner with them as a H&RM auction item and we purchased it.

It took awhile to connect with them, but when I did, Dorothy asked, "Was it dinner for two or four?" I said it was dinner for two, but Dorothy remarked, "It might be more fun if you brought another couple with you." We asked long-time H&RM supporters and hydro fans John and Sue Boone to join us and they jumped at the opportunity to join us for dinner with the Obertos in February 2010, about a month before the Obertos were scheduled to move. All seemed set, well almost, as Jayne and I were unlikely folks to have dinner with the Obertos; you see, the Obertos are the royalty of beef and pork snack meats, and the Tracy's flexitarians that occasionally eat fish and poultry (including Oberto Turkey Jerky), but never red meat. We had decided to just buck-up



and eat whatever was served, but hostess Dorothy solved the issue. When setting up the dinner date, she asked, "What do you prefer for dinner." Before I could get a word in, she told me a story. "You know my husband, Art, is Italian. Everyone thinks that because he's Italian that he must love all Italian food, and sometimes when we go to someone's house for dinner they serve lasagna, thinking it is something Art enjoys. Well, Art absolutely hates cheese!" I said that we'd prefer fish or chicken, to which Dorothy said, "I know exactly what I'll make."

We all arrived in the late afternoon to the Oberto house, a large, older brick rambler-basement home on a good-sized waterfront lot, and Art greeted us at the door. One step into the house and we knew we were in for a treat. The home was packed-full of memorabilia. Pictures of family, hydros and related Oberto Company photos were all over the walls. But there was much more. I learned that the Obertos are world travelers; they have been just about everywhere. Art explained, "It started with a trip to Hong Kong and then I used to look for those newspaper ads with \$999 travel packages and we'd book it and go. Later Dorothy and I found cruises. We book the least expensive room on the ship because we spend very little time in the room." They put on display things they have collected while traveling, from art and artifacts to clothing. Dorothy has even placed a couple of soft sculpture people on chairs and dressed them with clothes and accessories she has purchased on trips. The artificial Christmas tree was still up, complete with wonderful Christmas ornaments on it that Dorothy had collected from trips all over the world. Art explained that they travel so much and are home so little that they concluded, why put the tree up and take it down, so they just leave it up.

Dorothy and Art gave us a tour of the house, which is really a story of their lives. A giant Buddha in the living room collected from a trip to Asia, a bar in the dining room from another trip, art from Europe, etc., all mixed with mid-century era furniture that they purchased new decades ago. And then there is the huge partly finished basement that is more like a carnival fun house, which included many vintage, but fully operational, pinball machines that their kids and now grandchildren use. (Photo: Pinball 1) The unfinished basement ceiling is full of memorabilia such as the bike Art rode to work when he was a young man, the kids' first skis, and much more. And then there is a telephone booth with a soft sculpture person in it that is dressed with clothing Dorothy purchased on trips. And peppered throughout the house and basement is hydroplane racing memorabilia.



Taking a trip to the backyard was like going back into my childhood. The Obertos commissioned full-sized bronze statues of their grandchildren playing with or pulling homemade hydroplanes, just like children did in the 1950s and 1960s.

The Oberto house is famous for its unexpected part in hydroplane history. The Gale IV ran up on shore and beached itself in a rose garden in the backyard in 1954, before the Obertos purchased the property, when a Dr. Black owned it. The rose garden is about where a pond is today. After the Obertos purchased the property, a Black family member brought 8mm film of the party the family was having at the time of the 1954 race, including the Gale IV parked in the rose garden; the Black family member said the film belongs to the house. The Obertos put the old film on a DVD and made copies for both the Tracy and Boon families.

The Royal Order of the Turbine Club awards a perpetual trophy each year to a fan that has made a contribution to Unlimited Hydroplane racing, called the Potted Palm. It is awarded at their meeting in Tri-Cities, Wash. Saturday night before the hydro race each year, and Jayne and I were presented with the award in 2009. As part of the fun, we are expected to do something special with the Potted Palm, so we took the trophy with us and "planted" it in the former spot of the rose garden where the Gale IV beached. (Photo: Potted Palm 1 or 2)

Dinner was fabulous, both the food and ambiance. The table settings were hydro and Seattle World's Fair themed, complete with Century 21 tumblers, Seattle





World's Fair dinner plates, and wooden hydroplane table decorations and much more. Dorothy cooked a splendid fish dish, but the highlight might have been the flaming cherries jubilee served for dessert!

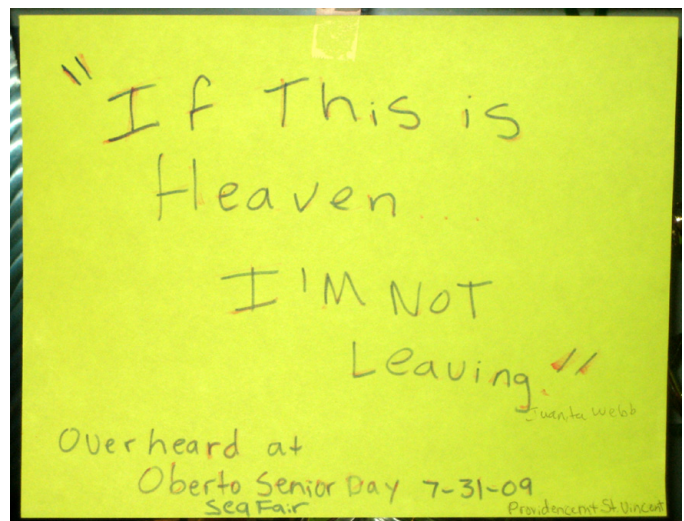
After dinner, we adjourned to the living room and viewed vintage footage of a video the Oberto Company made, called *Sausage and Roostertails*. The video is set around the 1981 hydroplane season. Dorothy and Art would follow their boat from race to race in their motor home, and Dorothy would often act as the chief cook for the boat crew. She was quite a jokester, too, often telling the crew, "You need to get a real job" or asking the driver, "Why does anyone want to drive a boat?"

On hydroplanes and Seattle, the Obertos voiced opinions and shared memories. Dorothy was blunt about the poor parking situation at Seafair's hydro race and wondered out-loud, "It's difficult to get to the race. Is it a master plan (by the City of Seattle) to destroy the sport on purpose or not?" And the Obertos reminisced about the hydro parties. Art has partied along the shore

of the racecourse and in the pits, passing out Oberto stickers, Oh Boy! Oberto snack meats, and his infamous pens that say on them, "stolen from Art Oberto." Art says, "I could hire people to hand out stuff, but this is what I like." It mirrors the down-to-earth lifestyle that is not only his image, but really is his lifestyle. On Seattle's hydro weekend, Dorothy partied at home, and there's a story behind it. The street that borders one side of them almost runs into Lake Washington, and one hydro weekend Dorothy noticed a bus parked there. Dorothy went over to investigate and found that the bus was from a Kent, Wash. assisted living group and the retired citizens were trying to view the Blue Angels. Dorothy invited the entire busload of people over to the house to watch the Blue Angels and have lemonade. That began the weekend tradition, which expanded to three retirement groups, including one coming from Tacoma, and now Dorothy provided lunch, too. The retirees look forward to and sincerely enjoy the parties and, for Dorothy, they have been a labor of love. As the Obertos were planning on moving to their retirement residence in early 2010, 2009 was the last scheduled hydro party at the house.

And how did the Oh Boy! Oberto slogan come about? Art noted that in his early years with the company that when things were slow at work he'd take a night class at Broadway Edison Tech. (now Seattle Central Community College) and a night school teacher coined the phrase Oh Boy! Oberto. And how'd Oberto get interested in producing beef jerky? Dorothy tried making beef jerky in her kitchen and while it was not perfect, it sparked the idea for the company to make jerky.

And what was it like to win the first time at Seafair? Art says, "It was a culmination of everyone's dream." We spent several hours with Dorothy and Art and they were gracious hosts. We learned about how important their family is to them, learned about their business, their love of hydroplanes,



and their affection for their city. No wonder the Obertos are Seattle icons. And while winning Seafair in the same year as when Art turned 80 was a dream come true for him, having dinner with Dorothy and Art was a dream come true for this fifty-something year-old guy who grew up in south Seattle pulling a hydro behind his bike while chewing Oberto brand jerky.

Postscript: The Obertos have since moved to their retirement residence on "Pill Hill" in Seattle, but are keeping the home on the lake. In 2010, they offered dinner at their new digs as a H&RM auction item; Jayne and I might bid on that if it is offered in 2011!



KIRO-TV's Steve Rable interviews Art Oberto after Steve David and *Oh Boy! Oberto* wins the Seattle Seafair Trophy in 2010. A happy Oberto team in background. ~~ Karl Pearson photo

Quotes and Factoids from Art and Dorothy Oberto

How did the Oberto Race Team go from a team that had a chance to win if a tier-one boat broke down, to being a National Champ? *Oberto credits his son Larry for the step-up. "Larry is most determined. He is a competitive racer. He has persistence and is humble. He can analyze what you are trying to do while you are doing it."*

Seafair. *"When the boats go out, the world stops." Art Oberto has attended all Seafair races except one, when he was in Mexico to attend a wedding.*

Sponsoring Hydroplanes. *Oberto first sponsored a boat in 1975. Art says, "In the early years I sponsored Bill Wurster. I had a "no run, no pay" contract. Every year was the last year we were going to sponsor." Later Oberto sponsored a new Leland hull and noted, "The Fred Leland boat we first sponsored was built in a garage in 5-6 weeks!"*

Dorothy's Famous Quote. *"This (hydroplane racing) is not a family hobby, it is a marketing tool."*

Art's Motto. *"Always make your payments, don't jeopardize the house!"*

Art on Going to School. *"Drop out of school, then clean the grease trap at the factory."*

Little Known Tidbits about Art. *Hates cheese. Loves ice cream and nonfat frozen yogurt. Non-drinker and never gambles.*

Family. *The Obertos have 4 children, 3 boys and 1 girl. They have 9 grandchildren.*

Politics? *Oberto didn't care much for Lyndon Johnson or Barry Goldwater and during that Presidential campaign he made buttons that read, "Vote for a Real Jerk—Oh Boy! Oberto."*

Background. *While the Oberto family has been a fixture in south Seattle for decades, Art graduated from West Seattle High School. His dad passed away when he was 16, and Art had to modify his schedule, with a late arrival or early dismissal schedule to help run the sausage business.*

On Moving and Downsizing. *"We pack up stuff that we don't want and put it on the parking strip and it's gone the next morning." Also, "The kids have been over and they put a piece of tape with their name on anything they want."*

Racing. *"Always have a gimmick; one year we had an all-woman crew."*

Little Known Fact. *The Obertos spend a fair amount of time in Mexico in their motor home; they have helped provide building systems to both the local school and Catholic Church there.*

The Debacle in Doha

Scott Liddycoat Wins the 2011 Oryx Cup U.I.M. Championship by Lon Erickson

Scott Liddycoat and *Valken.com* caps an outstanding rookie season by coming out on top in Doha; though it wasn't a simple win. After a controversial event where two heats involved gun-jumping, subsequent delays in making the ruling, and in-effective communication from race officials, the U-7 team proved it had what it took to win. Consistency all season, driving skill, and speed to run with the top boats paid off in the end.



Chris Denslow photo

Video replays of the starts were a large part of two rulings and delays in official standings for heat 3B and the final. The official winner of the event was changed after a 45-minute delay and lengthy review of the final heat starting line video. The video clearly showed three boats, U-1, 88, and U-96, over the line at the start of the final.

The Oryx Cup event had 12 boats scheduled to appear, though only 10 boats actually scored points over the weekend. The race had some excellent competition over the two days and the people in attendance were treated to an exciting weekend of racing.

Not as much could be said for the live streaming back to the states and around the world. Once again, the live video feed was inconsistent, sporadic, and unreliable. Even so much that H1 felt compelled to re-post links later to view heats that were not able to be seen in their entirety. Between the streaming issues and the delays in posting official results, the majority of the viewers signed off early or left thinking another boat was the winner.

For as much as H1 Unlimited has talked about taking the sport to the next level and running it as a business entity, the lack of execution and professionalism at this event proves they have a long way to go. We can only hope there is a bigger, better plan out there for the future success of the sport.

As was the case for the last two years, a crowd was on hand again at the Hydroplane & Raceboat Museum to stay up all night, hang out with fellow hydro fans, enjoy snacks, a hot breakfast, and watch the action. What could be seen of it anyway.



Lon Erickson photo

Final Heat – Official Results

Boat	Driver	Avg. Speed
1) U-7 <i>Valken.com</i>	Scott Liddycoat	131.499
2) U-5 <i>Graham Trucking</i>	Jeff Bernard	120.143
3) U-100 <i>Leland Unlimited</i>	Greg Hopp	117.821
4) U-57 <i>Formula</i>	Jimmy Shane	112.04
5) U-1 <i>Oh Boy! Oberto</i>	Steve David	110.376
6) U-96 <i>Spirit of Qatar</i>	Dave Villwock	105.576
7) 88 <i>Degree Men</i>	J. Michael Kelly	103.578

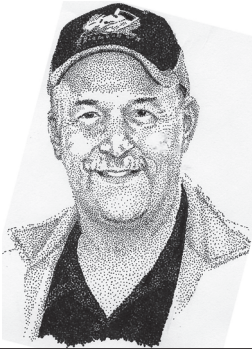


A Short Lived Victory for Steve David and Oh Boy! Oberto

Officials, top right, saying, OOPS! After people went home thinking *Oberto* had won the Oryx Cup. When the sandstorm cleared it turned out Scott Liddycoat and *Valken.com* had been leading the field across the finish line. Steve David crossed first, but a lap behind the field along with Villwock in *Spirit of Qatar* and J. Michael Kelly in *Degree Men*. ~ Chris Denslow photos



H Y D R O F I L E



Lon Erickson

U-9. Mike & Lori Jones are planning to make a full time commitment to the 2012 H1 Series in 2012. Along with the recent upgrades to the running surfaces, a new modern cowling, repairs from damage occurred at 2011 Seafair, they have also had a new safety capsule built and installing a new cockpit during the winter. Crew chief **Jeff Campbell**, along with other former Bud veteran team members will be the nucleus for the Jones Racing team. **Jon Zimmerman** has been named to drive the boat again for 2012. The team is also continuing the pursuit for a national sponsorship in 2012. For more information see their new website at www.u9racing.com

U-96. After securing the H1 National championship for 2011, **Erick Ellstrom** commented the U-96 will carry the U number of **U-1.96** for the 2012 season. The U-1 to recognize the National Championship designation and 96 to

honor the Spirit of Qatar sponsorship.

At the Oryx Cup U.I.M. Championship event, **Sam Cole** and **Sheikh Hassan** announced the renewal of the Oryx Cup event for 2012. The Doha event will take place on Nov. 15-17, 2012

Albert Lee Appliance has signed on to partner with Seafair for the 2012. Albert Lee is the title sponsor of the hydroplane race and an official festival wide sponsor

Peters & May, sponsor of a number of American Power Boat Association racing teams and the company entrusted with transport of the Air National Guard H1 Unlimited fleet to Doha, Qatar, has signed on as the title sponsor for APBA's 2011 Hall of Champions ceremony. The annual ceremony takes place January 28, 2012 in Chicago, Illinois.

Dave Holley, Peters & May C.E.O. reports that plans are underway for transporting the H1 Unlimited fleet of 12 hydroplanes and equipment back from Doha to Jacksonville. Further details will be updated.

Several sources have reported the ANG H1 Unlimited Series Winter Meetings and Awards Banquet are scheduled for the end of February, the location is TBD.

H E R I T A G E



Craig Fjarlie

On Second Thought

The delayed announcement that three boats jumped the gun in the final heat at Qatar produced angry comments from some participants. Unfortunately, it's not the first time the outcome of a race was changed long after the last boat was back on its trailer.

One of the earliest incidents when the apparent winner was denied the trophy was the 1955 Gold Cup in Seattle. Many casual observers, and a few poorly informed broadcasters, declared *Miss Thriftway* the winner. Officials needed a few minutes to figure overall speeds and factor in bonus points that were awarded in that era. (This was long before the days of pocket-sized calculators and computers.) By the time they were done crunching numbers, many fans had left Lake Washington certain *Miss Thriftway* had won. Then came the announcement that *Gale V* had the lowest elapsed time and was awarded bonus points. A Detroit boat that didn't win a single heat had actually won the race.

The 1956 Gold Cup in Detroit produced another premature announcement about the outcome of the race. Some officials believed *Miss Thriftway* had hit a buoy. For a few minutes Chuck Thompson, driver of *Miss Pepsi*, held the Gold Cup and was declared the winner. KING-TV film of the incident showed *Miss Thriftway*'s wash dislodged the buoy, but the boat passed it safely. Long after the race, Bill Muncey was finally awarded the Gold Cup. It should be noted some observers felt the film was unclear and decades later still insisted Thompson was the rightful winner. The historical record, however, shows Muncey as the winner.

A late call about a gun jump in the final heat in the 1959 Gold Cup delayed determination of the winner. With the 1955 and 1956 incidents still fresh in their minds, officials and reporters waited nervously while photos of the start

were reviewed repeatedly. Nearly two hours after the race it was finally decided that Norm Evans and *Miss Spokane* had jumped the gun. The trophy went to Bill Stead and *Maverick*, dashing the hopes of Bill Muncey and the Thriftway team.

Another incident happened in Seattle in 1960. This time, a mishap caused a change in the apparent outcome. The final heat was stopped twice, first when *Miss U.S. I* caught fire. Rex Manchester and *Miss Spokane* were less-than a buoy length from the finish line when the referee ordered the race stopped. The checkered flag was already out and *Miss Spokane* was across the finish line before the last flare dropped in the water. In those years, if the first running of the final heat was stopped at any time before the first place boat crossed the finish line, the heat had to be re-run. Spokane partisans believed the boat had for all intents and purposes finished the heat, which would have made it the winner. The referee said no, the race was ordered stopped before *Miss Spokane* finished, so the heat had to be re-run. The field was still in the first lap of the re-start when *Thriftway Too* caught fire. Again, the race was stopped. Darkness was falling before the course was cleared, so the second re-start of the final heat was delayed until Monday, the only time in Seattle that ever happened. *Miss Thriftway* finished first in the Monday running of the final and won the race. A half-century later, some people still believe *Miss Spokane* was robbed.

There were few incidents throughout the 1960s, '70s, and '80s that delayed determination of the outcome. In 1973, at both Washington, D.C., and Toledo, questions with calls affecting boats back in the pack delayed the announcement of overall positions, but first place was never in question.

During the Hydro-Prop years, a controversial call changed the outcome of the 2004 Gold Cup. *Miss Budweiser* was the apparent winner and Dave Villwock was presented with the trophy. Officials, however, were reviewing film of the run up the backstretch to the shape-up turn, before the start. It was finally determined that Villwock had made a driving infraction. The trophy was taken away from the Budweiser team and given to Nate Brown and *Miss DYC*. The Budweiser organization put on a professional face, but privately the team was bitterly disappointed and felt the call was without basis. In the official record, however, the call was confirmed and Brown's name is on the trophy.

A controversial gun jumping incident occurred at San Diego in 2008. *Oh Boy! Oberto* physically led the final heat. It was evident that some boats, including *Oberto*, had jumped the gun. Officials were uncertain if *Formula* was among the jumpers and *Beacon Plumbing* was prematurely declared the winner. The video camera at the start line was pointed into the afternoon sun and boats appeared as shadows. Identifying the gun jumpers was nearly impossible. An hour after the race, following numerous reviews of the video, officials cleared *Formula* of jumping the gun and Jeff Bernard was given the trophy. This time, the Beacon Plumbing team went home bitterly disappointed.

The Oryx Cup was not the only 2011 race with a controversial finish. At Madison, when *Spirit of Qatar* hooked in the final and veered into the path of *Oh Boy! Oberto* causing a collision, officials took time to review the rule book before announcing the outcome. It was too late to re-run the final, so the referee ruled that *Qatar* caused the stoppage. *Oberto* was a victim of the incident, not responsible for the red flags. *Oberto* was declared the winner, about 20 minutes after the accident. Some teams felt if *Oberto* had not run over *Qatar* the heat would have been allowed to continue. Both boats should have been disqualified, thus making *Red Dot* the winner. (The 2011 Gold Cup program followed that line of reasoning and erroneously reported *Red Dot* as the winner in Madison.) Objections notwithstanding, the referee's decision was final. Unlike the disappointment in Qatar, at Madison the Oberto team was the beneficiary of a delayed and controversial call.

Every sport will have incidents in which official decisions affect the outcome. A called strike three can end a baseball game, pass interference can set up a late score in a football game, and an inadvertent bump can result in a disqualification in a horserace. It's no different in hydroplane racing. Officials are hired to make the difficult decisions. Video technology can make the referee's job easier, or it can make it more challenging, depending on clarity of the images and angle of the camera. Calls may be greeted with cheers or skepticism, but either way the referee has the final say.

~~ UNJ

THE OAKLAND BOYS, Part Four

by Andy Muntz



H&RM Collection

Ollie Meek and Stanley Dollar in the cockpit of the G-4 *Miss Great Lakes* (the former *Miss Golden Gate III*) after winning the 1948 APBA Detroit Gold Cup.



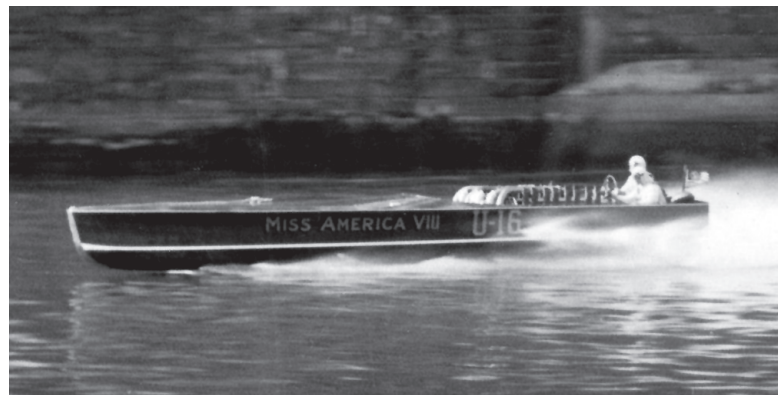
Warroom photo

Edgar Kaiser in a meeting with a Mr. Garfield and Mr. Cutting.

The sport of unlimited hydroplane racing saw innovation and fan interest grow tremendously in the decade that followed World War II. The racing action was centered at Detroit and Seattle, but thanks to five young friends who grew up together near Lake Merritt in Oakland, California, that city also made an important contribution to hydroplane racing history during that time, even though Oakland would never host an unlimited race.

By 1952, three of the friends had already made a significant mark on the sport: Dan Arena introduced the first Allison engine to hydros in 1946 and had become a leading boat designer, Danny Foster won the Gold Cup races in 1947 and 1948 and Lou Fageol won it in 1951. Now, the other two, Stanley Dollar and Edgar Kaiser, would have their turn.

Dollar and Kaiser were the wealthiest of the neighborhood chums, and had the good fortune to taste the speed and excitement of Gold Cup racing at an early age. Dollar, for example, whose grandfather founded the giant Dollar Steam Ship Line, loved to remind his buddies about the time his father arranged for him to get a ride with Gar Wood in the *Miss America VIII*. His family and the Kaiser family, builders of dams, ships, and the makers of aluminum and steel, would often spend



Rosenfeld photo

George Woods winning the 1931 Harmsworth Trophy in U-16 *Miss America VIII* on the Detroit River.

summers together on Lake Tahoe, where several big speedboats were available to them. Dollar's father had purchased the old *Greenwich Folly*, the winner of the 1926 and 1927 Gold Cups, as well as a boat named *Cigarette IV*, which won the President's Cup in 1926.

Organized boat races were also on the summer itinerary. Stanley Dollar drove the old *Greenwich Folly*, renamed *Baby Skipalong*, to victory in the 1934 Inboard Handicap Race on Lake Tahoe and, a year later, even drove a small inboard boat named *Uncle Sam* in the Spreckles International Trophy race held on the River Seine in Paris. But, while his friends Dan Arena, Danny Foster, and Lou Fageol were getting involved with Gold Cup racing, Dollar was mainly content driving smaller race boats in the Lake Tahoe area.

That changed in 1948, when Dollar decided to join his friends on the big stage with a new boat that he named *Skip-A-Long*, an all-metal craft that featured a unique four-point design and had the cockpit in front of the engine. The boat's shining moment came at the 1949 Gold Cup when Dollar was the second fastest qualifier, placed second in all three heats, won the bonus points for having the fastest average speed for the entire race and claimed runner-up honors. He then won the Detroit Memorial race and later shared race victories with Dan Arena in *Such Crust* to win the Harmsworth Trophy for the United States. By winning a two-lap run-off with Arena the next day, Dollar won the right to call the trophy his own.

But, *Skip-A-Long* would have a brief career. Shortly after it was taken back to Lake Tahoe, the boat sank during an exhibition race on the lake and came to rest at a spot that was too deep for it to be retrieved. Meanwhile, Dollar had purchased Fageol's old *So-Long*, the same boat that gave Danny Foster his first Gold Cup victory in 1947, and spent the next couple of years driving the craft in the Lake Tahoe area as *Short Snorter*.

Following Lou Fageol's 1951 Gold Cup victory aboard *Slo-mo-shun V*, team owner Stan Sayres found himself once more in need of a driver. Ted Jones, the man who had driven *Slo-mo IV* to victory in the 1950 Gold Cup and who had also designed both boats, left the team following a dispute with Sayres.



George Townsend's G-8 *Greenwich Folly* as it looked in the 1920s

File 10 photo



Above: *Uncle Sam* in the pits at Red Bank in 1948.

H&RM Collection



Stanley Dollar and riding mechanic Ollie Meeks and the G-25 *Skip-A-Long* winning the 1949 APBA Gold Cup.

H&RM Collection



The G-8 *Short Snorter* and Stanley Dollar at Lake Tahoe's Lake Championship in 1954, before it sank.

H&RM Collection

Fageol immediately suggested that his old friend Stanley Dollar be given the ride.

Dollar's career with the Slo-mo team got off to a rocky start. Four laps into his first heat aboard *Slo-mo-shun IV* at the 1952 Gold Cup, the boat lost its propeller and gave Dollar a ringside seat to watch a battle between Fageol in *Slo-mo-shun V* and Chuck Thompson in *Miss Pepsi*. The hometown fans cheered wildly as Fageol and Thompson raced neck-and-neck at over 100 mph, but then groaned when *Slo-mo V* suddenly dropped out with an overheated engine.

Knowing that *Slo-mo IV* was a better competition boat than its younger sister, the Slo-mo crew borrowed a propeller from Slo-mo V and put all of their trust in Dollar to win the Gold Cup for Seattle. That challenge became easier during the second heat when it became *Miss Pepsi's* turn for mechanical problems. Dollar and Thompson had duelled for only one lap when *Miss Pepsi* suddenly dropped out with an overheated gearbox, leaving *Slo-mo IV* and Dollar with an easy victory. It turned out that was all Dollar needed. The damage to *Miss Pepsi* was such that it was done for the day, which allowed Dollar to



H&RM Collection

Lou Fageol returns to Leschi Park with the new driver for the U-27 *Slo-mo-shun IV*, Stanley Dollar.



Connie Maun photo

Stanley Dollar and the U-27 *Slo-mo-shun IV* win the Seattle APBA Gold Cup, the *Slo-mo IV's* second and Sayres third.



Bart Carter Collection

1956, Henry Kaiser in Hawaii for a mile straightaway attempt with the U-9 *Hawaii Kai* and U-10 *Scooter Too*.

simply nurse the "Grand Old Lady" around the course at about 84 mph in the final heat and take the checkered flag in triumph. Another Gold Cup for another of the Oakland boys.

Edgar Kaiser was next, but because of his responsibilities toward the family business, he would make history as an owner, rather than a driver.

At about the time Dan Arena and Danny Foster were stunning the Detroit racing establishment with their second place finish in the 1938 Gold Cup, Kaiser lived in desolate central Washington State, managing his family's contract as a builder of Grand Coulee Dam. As he moved from that task to the running of a Kaiser shipyard in Vancouver, Washington, as well as to his involvement in other portions of the Kaiser family business, he still fondly remembered the days of driving speedboats with Stanley Dollar on beautiful Lake Tahoe.

He finally got more involved in boat racing through his father, Henry Kaiser, who also loved boating and would often compete in local races with an inboard hydro he called *Hornet*. Later, Henry Kaiser campaigned Gold Cup boats named *Fleur du Lac*, *Hot Metal*, and *Aluminum First* in the late 1940s, and campaigned a boat named *Scooter* in 1954 and another named *Scooter Too* in 1955 and 1956. The ill-fated U-9 Hawaii Kai was designed and built by Les Staudacher

It was about this time that Henry Kaiser became enamored with some property east of Honolulu on the island of Oahu, which he decided to develop into a community to be known as Hawaii Kai, called the “Pink Dream” by Hawaiians. To help promote the project, he added a boat to his fleet named *Hawaii Kai*, which debuted at the Mapes Mile-High Gold Cup late in the 1955 season. Then, as the 1956 campaign drew closer, he ordered two more boats: a hydro to be named *Hawaii Kai II* and to be built by Ken St. Oegger in Los Angeles and a boat designed by Ted Jones that was patterned after *Rebel, Suh*. The latter was to be named *Hawaiian Village*.

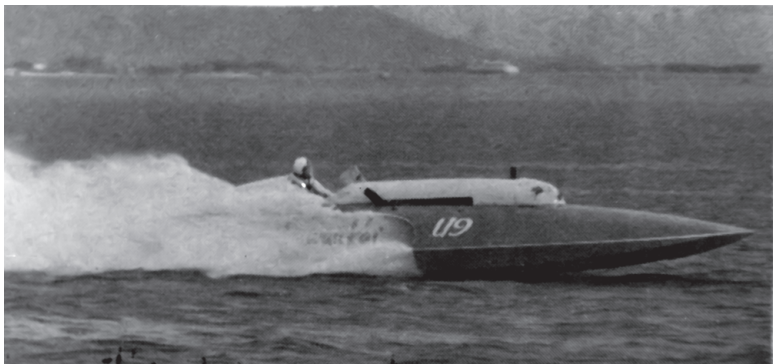
Meanwhile, to help promote some interest in hydroplane racing in Hawaii, Kaiser shipped *Hawaii Kai* and *Scooter Too* to the tropical paradise for an exhibition run on Keehi Lagoon near Honolulu. That’s where calamity struck. *Hawaii Kai* flipped and was destroyed during an attempt to set a world straightaway record and driver St. Oegger was seriously injured.

The accident shook Henry Kaiser so much that he decided to get out of the sport and told Edgar that if he wanted to take over the team, he could. Edgar obliged, suspended the *Hawaii Kai II* project so St. Oegger could recover from his injuries, and turned his attention to the other new boat, which was taking shape in Les Staudacher’s shop in Kawkawlin, Michigan. It was renamed *Hawaii Kai III* by the time it emerged from the shop and had its first taste of action at the Mile High Trophy race on Lake Tahoe. Kaiser then took advantage of a windfall. After *Slo-*



Kaiser Collection

Henry Kaiser’s U-10 *Scooter Too* at Lake Tahoe in 1955. This boat was powered by a V-24 Allison 3420 and was nicknamed “The Submarine,” because it spent a *lot* of time underwater.



David Volpi photo

The pink U-9 *Hawaii Kai* in the Mapes-Mile-High Gold Cup at Tahoe City, Calif. It was designed and built by Les Staudacher and ran a V-12 Allison-131. Of the eight Allison G-3’s built, Kaiser had three for the mile attempt.



Bart Carter photo

The ill-fated *Hawaii Kai* was destroyed when the rudderpost sheered off and went out of control. It was reported by the Associated Press to be going 193 mph “and climbing.” Kent Hitchcock believed it would have topped 200 mph and ended with an average in the 190’s.”

mo-shun IV was destroyed on the Detroit River two months later, he purchased the team's equipment and also enticed the Slo-mo crew to join the Hawaii Kai camp. (At right: Jack Regas and *Hawaii Kai III* in 1956 at Seattle, Jack Regas on deck. Middle photo 1957: The former Slo-mo crew at Seattle with *Hawaii Kai III*.)

With its ties to the beloved "Grand Old Lady," as well as its stunning tropical pink paint job, *Hawaii Kai III* quickly became a fan favorite and wrapped up the 1956 season with a third place finish at the President's Cup and a victory in the Sahara Cup near Las Vegas. But, about this time, Henry Kaiser chose to move to Hawaii permanently and left the day-to-day running of the family empire to Edgar, which greatly limited the time he could spend with the hydroplane. So, he sold the boat to his crew for one dollar, put former Slo-mo crew chief Mike Welsch in charge and provided the team with enough money to keep the boat running through the 1957 campaign, which turned out to be a banner year for the team.

During the season opener on Lake Chelan in eastern Washington, Jack Regas drove *Hawaii Kai III* to an astounding 116 mph in one lap and in Seattle he set a new Gold Cup record with a heat average of over 109 mph. Regas then outpaced Bill Muncey to win the Silver Cup in Detroit, won all three heats to win the President's Cup, and wrapped up the season with wins in the Governor's Cup and Sahara Cup, collecting enough points along the way to win the National Championship. Finally, for good measure, he drove the *Hawaii Kai III* through a mile course and set a new piston-powered world mile straightaway record of 187.627 mph. [Regas set the mile record twice, the first was 183.3559 mph the day before. He also set a new piston powered kilometer record that day at 195.329 mph, 314.352 kph, and was the first to run 200 mph. Ed]

Given Kaiser's busy schedule and the fact that the team had accomplished everything except a victory in the Gold Cup, few people



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Jack Regas and *Hawaii Kai III* at the U.S. Naval Station at Sandpoint for the November mile attempt. The team was based on the other side of Lake Washington at Denny Park, renamed Hawaiian Village II by the team, despite the cold weather. Three other boats were also going to make the mile run, *Thriftway Too*, *Sunnee Brand*, and the 7-litre *Galloping Gael*.

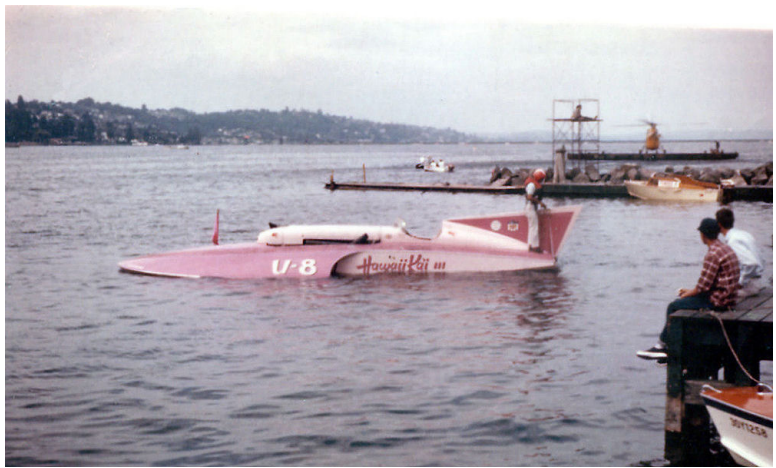
expected *Hawaii Kai III* to return in 1958. That seemed to be confirmed in June, when Kaiser held an elegant banquet to announce that he was leaving the sport and had put *Hawaii Kai III* up for sale. Then, he promptly left on a vacation to Greece. But, as he basked in the Mediterranean sun, Kaiser had a change of heart, picked up a telephone in Athens and called Welsch. Could the boat be made ready for the Gold Cup? he asked. Only three weeks before the race, Welsch rounded up the crew and they went to work getting the “Pink Lady” ready to go racing again.

Kaiser figured they needed to be creative to pull it off, so he called the crew together as soon as he got back in town and asked them what they felt was the weakest component on the boat—the thing most likely to prevent them from winning. The unanimous response, came the quill shaft, came the unanimous response, a three-inch-long piece of fragile metal that drove the supercharger’s impeller blades to about 600 revolutions per second. But it would be difficult to get a fresh quill shaft for every heat. A new rule restricted teams to the use of only one engine for the entire race, which meant the only option was to somehow replace the quill shaft between heats, a complicated process that normally took two hours to complete. That didn’t stop the crew from trying, though, and with considerable practice they were eventually able to do the deed in only 25 minutes—quick enough.

The plan worked to perfection. With a new quill shaft in the engine each time he drove onto the course, it gave him the freedom to push his boat harder. Regas was so dominant in winning both of his preliminary heats that a representative from another boat asked that officials check the serial numbers on the engine to make sure that the crew hadn’t somehow switched power plants. Regas then drove the *Hawaii Kai III* to another first-place finish in the final heat and claimed the 1958 Gold Cup for Edgar Kaiser.

When the five Oakland boys grew up together, poring over the boating magazines each month to get the latest news about Gar Wood and other renowned boat racers of the day, none of them could have imagined having an impact on a sport that took place more than two thousand miles away on the other side of the continent. To think that all five would make a significant contribution to Gold Cup racing would have been like believing in Paul Bunyon or the Easter Bunny. But when the Gold Cup trophy was handed to Edgar Kaiser, the improbable had become true. In the span of twenty years, all five of those boyhood friends had made an indelible mark on the sport’s most prestigious race.

~~ UNJ



Jack Regas, near the tail, can't seem get *Hawaii Kai III* running during a test at Seattle in 1958, and waits for a rope.

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David Volpi photo

A very happy Hawaii Kai crew get the celebration dunking in Lake Washington after winning the APBA Gold Cup in Seattle.

IN THIS DECEMBER 2011 ISSUE

An Evening With Dorothy and Art Oberto by Chris Tracy	1
Quotes and Factoids from Art and Dorothy Oberto by Chris Tracy	6
The Debacle in Doha by Lon Erickson	7
HydroFile News by Lon Erickson	9
On Second Thought by Craig Fjarlie	9
The Oakland Boys; Part Four by Andy Muntz	11

NEXT MONTH: Qatar Race Report

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