



UNLIMITED NEWSJOURNAL

A Chronicle of Speed

SPECIAL SLO-MO-SHUN ISSUE

A conversation with Don Ibsen

Last surviving member of Slo-mo team.

Don G. Ibsen is the last-known surviving crewmember from the Slo-mo team. He worked on the crew as a teenager, from 1952 until Slo-mo-shun IV crashed just before the 1956 Gold Cup. He then transferred to the crew of Hawaii Ka'i III, followed by a year with Miss Bardahl. Ibsen was born in Seattle in 1935. He attended Bellevue High School and transferred to Seattle Prep, from which he graduated. He took college courses from Seattle University, but left school before graduating. "My mom wanted me to be a white-collar worker and my gut would say I'm a

blue-collar worker. I love fixing things," he explains. "Because I was one foot in college and one foot in blue collar, I had to find my own legs through my life experiences."

Ibsen spent his youth working in hardware stores, marine supply places, a plumbing company as a

buyer, and worked for a year at the Boeing Company. "I was getting a broad experience. I didn't know at the time what it would lead to, but I was basically finding my way." Later, he was employed by Arby's Roast Beef Restaurants, doing maintenance work on refrigeration, gas, and electronic equipment, and fans. "I had 10 restaurants I rotated around in one week." He later worked for another restaurant chain before going into business for himself. He performed maintenance and repair work for restaurants and property management firms.

Ibsen, now 81, worked until he was 70. He and his wife, Marie, live in Anacortes, north of Seattle. His relationship with boat racing goes back to a great uncle, Ferd Ibsen, who competed in the 1914 and 1915 Gold Cup races. His father, Don S. Ibsen, was a neighbor



Chris Tracy



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of Stan Sayres. Before long, Don G. was learning about unlimited hydroplanes.

The following interview was conducted on October 7, 2016, by Craig Fjarlie and Bob Senior.

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Chairman's Comments

From the H1 Chairman



Doug
Bernstein

I have come to the conclusion that the world is upside down. On February 18, I was playing golf in the Detroit area, in 69-degree weather. Could the beginning of the H1 season be far behind?

Sadly, after a week of 60-plus degree weather, reality set in. Soon, Southeastern Michigan sustained over 650,000 power outages, resulting from sustained winds for about 12 hours of over 40 mph, with gusts recorded of up to 69 mph, on a perfectly clear day. Needless to say, the Detroit River was not race ready, as the breeze was against the current. As I write this column, the predicted low is about 15 degrees.

Instead, the dedicated H1 personnel, including owners, drivers, crew, directors and race site representatives, continue to get ready for the 2017 season. Many have complained that more information regarding the season has not been forthcoming. They are correct. The reason is that we want

to release information when it is absolutely correct, rather than having to backtrack from that which was previously announced. Rest assured that there are many things in the works, which hopefully will be rolled out in the near future.

I'm aware that there are many who doubt the health or continued viability of the sport; like most motorsports, H1 is not without its challenges. While we will work to solve the issues which we face, I also see this as an opportunity to reinvent the sport. As a result, you may see some changes from time to time at our events. We will undoubtedly try some things that will be unpopular and/or unsuccessful, but my hope and expectation is that these will be few and far between.

Among the items on our radar is the use of improved technology, which would result in a much more fan-friendly experience, and hopefully minimize the opportunity

for controversy. However, we will operate within our budgetary means and we may not be able to accomplish everything that we want to as quickly as we would like. The H1 directors, race sites, and owners are committed to putting together a solid, realistic business plan, but be aware that it will be developed and executed over time.

Fortunately, there are lots of people who have reached and expressed their willingness to help. With everyone's cooperation and support, we will be able to set a course for continued improvement. Please feel free to contribute your ideas. I'm always open to innovation.



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Letters may be edited for clarity and space.

The man who saved the UNJ passes away.



Karl Pearson

Unlimited NewsJournal editor emeritus, Michael Prophet, 70, passed away February 24, 2017, after a dignified and hard-fought six-year battle with colon cancer. Prophet, a retired steelworker, was a long-time member of the UNJ leadership team; at one point or another, he was an Unlimiteds Unanimous member attending monthly meetings, the UNJ's text editor, our longest serving editor, and the UNJ editor emeritus. The UNJ has lost a good friend and we

extend our sincere sympathy to his two daughters and his partner, Sharon.

Prophet started attending the monthly Unlimited Unanimous monthly meetings in the 1990s. He especially had an interest in the history of unlimited hydroplane racing. In December 1999, Prophet became the UNJ's text editor, receiving and maintaining our inventory of potential stories for publication.

In those days, articles were sometimes submitted to the UNJ typed while others were sent in a long email. Michael archived the articles that were submitted, word processed and keyboarded typed articles, or formatted emailed articles into word-processed documents. He would then start collecting photos for stories he had "in the can."

Michael had a love affair with hydroplane photos. He's spent many days each year at the Hydroplane and Raceboat Museum locating and scanning photos that might be used with UNJ stories. He received photos from UNJ photographers and saved almost all of them electronically.

In 2004, our longtime UNJ layout editor expressed a desire to leave the volunteer job. Our chief story editor and fact checker had passed away and his good friend, our lead proofreader, decided to quit shortly after his story editor friend passed away.

The UNJ was still a print publication. Putting each issue together required many skills and it was time consuming. It was published using PageMaker technology—relatively

Continued on page 20.

We love to hear from our readers.

The problem with the Madison Regatta is the time of the year they have the regatta. When the race was in the fall (Labor Day weekend) they never had bad weather. Now that they have it in the spring they have had bad weather eight out of ten years. The weather in the spring is still unstable and the rains upstream (New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Indiana) are still flooding and putting trash in the Ohio River. it's simple ... the weather isn't stable in the spring and it is stable in late summer or late fall.

Henry Kosciuszko

I read your comments and see that you truly "get" the problem that the unlimiteds are facing today. The one statement that I have made for a couple of years now is that racing is not about the competition, it is about being entertained and if H1 or race sites do not treat it as such, they will disappear.

Here are my ideas on the sport and I write this only as a person of similar interest that you might see agreement with.

Since people come to the beach to be entertained they consider:

- 1. A blowover or two crashes as a positive thing. (I didn't say I do since I know what that can mean.) People want to think they have just seen something of importance.*
- 2. Attention span is short so four hours is the limit for holding that attention, but they want to be mesmerized during the entire time.*
- 3. They expect to pay for that entertainment so price is not the problem, the entertainment is. If they are seeing record-setting attempts made, they see it as a positive.*
- 4. The younger generation grew up taking their cars somewhere to be worked on, so are not fascinated by the mechanical miracles of a jet engine. Just look at Monster Jam and its success. The kids are fascinated by the noise, big jumps, and wreck recovery.*

In summary, I simply repeat what you have said in your article. We have to change our way of looking at things and think way outside the envelope to any water-sport out there that can be combined with the racing to attract others, especially if the costs are minimal.

Victor Brown

The Grand Old Lady of Seattle (and her younger sister).

by Andy Muntz

Nestled between modern glass office buildings on the northwest shore of Portage Bay in Seattle is an old wooden structure with crystal windows and high cathedral ceilings that is steeped with the smell of sawdust and varnish. It remains the home of one of Seattle's oldest boat builders: the Jensen Motor Boat Company. The old building is a site of considerable historical significance for many Seattle residents because, through the winter of 1948 and the spring and summer of 1949, master shipwright Anchor Jensen built a race boat there that revolutionized the sport of hydroplane racing.

The project was financed by a soft-spoken Seattle car dealer named Stanley Sayres, who became enamored by boat racing in 1926 when he owned a Maxwell auto-



Stan Sayres



Hydroplane and Raceboat Museum

mobile dealership in Pendleton, Oregon. Later, he was given an opportunity to assume ownership of a Chrysler dealership in Seattle and, for a time, was too busy to race boats. But, then he began to drive an inboard craft named *Seaflow* and, in 1937, purchased the record-holding 225-cubic-inch boat *Tops II* from Pops Cooper. His wife, Madeliene, remarked one day that he was so fast that the other boats seemed to be going in slow motion, so the craft soon had the name *Slomoshun* painted on its side.

Sayres raced the little hydroplane throughout the Pacific Northwest for four years until it burned and sank. To replace it, he bought another boat from Cooper in 1942 named *Tops III*, but the thing arrived with one of its sponsons damaged. To make the repair, Sayres turned to a fellow boat racer named Ted Jones.

Jones was born in Seattle as the son of a cabinetmaker and at a very

young age showed a skill for working with wood. He also became enamored with speedboats and, at the age of 19 years old, ordered plans for a race boat that he saw advertised on a can of glue. Some years later he began to experiment with the idea of a three-point hydroplane and eventually produced a boat named *Wasp*, which he drove to limited-class titles in the Pacific Northwest and Canada. By 1938 he was campaigning a 225-cubic-inch boat named *Phantom* in the same events as Sayres and his *Slomoshun*, but also had begun to develop an idea that he thought would allow boats to achieve much higher speeds.

The three-point boats like *Phantom* and *Slomoshun* used sponsons on either side of the bow to lift the hull to the surface of the water. But, while the front of a three-point boat skimmed across the waves, the rear still plowed through the water. So, Jones took the idea one



It was during the process of repairing the former *Tops III* that Ted Jones first approached Sayres with the idea of building an unlimited hydroplane.

step further. He felt the boats would go much faster if aerodynamics lifted the aft portion of the hull as well so that the propeller would operate on the surface, called “prop riding.” But, he faced a problem. He couldn’t find a person willing to finance the building of a boat that would test the idea.

Then came Stan Sayres and the need to repair the old *Tops III*, which he had renamed *Slo-mo-shun II*. During the project, Jones approached Sayres with a plan to build an unlimited-class hydro using the new idea. He even told Sayres that if the boat didn’t set a new world straightaway record, he’d pay him back, a \$100 a month. Sayres still wasn’t entirely sold on the idea, though, and made a counter offer. He asked Jones to build another limited, *Slo-mo-shun III*, as a test and, based on its performance, he’d decide whether to talk more. So, Jones designed a 16-foot, 266-cubic-inch class hull to see if his prop-riding concept would work.

Construction of *Slo-mo-shun III* started in Jones’ basement then was completed in the shops of a meticulous shipwright named

Anchor Jensen, who had worked on several of the earlier limited-class hydroplanes campaigned by Stan Sayres. The boat emerged from Jensen’s shop in 1947 and proceeded to run about 10 miles per hour faster than every other boat in its class. That convinced Sayres to make the big investment in the next logical step, an unlimited-class hydroplane. Thus began the *Slo-mo-shun IV* project.

Sayres had the money and Jones had the idea, but they needed a third member of the team to actually build the craft, so they

turned once again to Anchor Jensen. The latest in a family legacy of shipbuilders that stretched back 180 years to Denmark, Jensen had graduated number one in his class at the Great Lakes Naval Training Academy, worked alongside some of the top naval architects in the world, was a natural mechanic who could tear down and rebuild engines with the best of them, and had created a comfortable living building wooden yachts and runabouts for the richest residents of the Seattle area.

Yet, as things turned out, there was one thing he could not do. He couldn’t get along with the outspoken Ted Jones, nor could Jones get along with him.

The rift between Jones and Jensen was still felt 50 years later. In an article written by Bill Chuchon, Jr., and published in the *Unlimited NewsJournal* in March 2004, Jensen’s son, DeWitt, made a case for his view that Jones had very little to do with the design of the *Slo-mo-shun IV*. He maintained that his contribution was little more than one tiny sketch on a scrap of paper and that his father prepared all the



The three principals of the *Slo-mo-shun IV* project: Ted Jones, left, Anchor Jensen, on the deck, and Stan Sayres,



The newly completed *Slo-mo-shun IV* outside the Jensen boat shop.

working drawings, and came up with the design of all the struts, the rudders, the step-up gear, and the selection of the running gear. In June 2005, the *NewsJournal* published the other side of the argument in a story that was written by Weldon Johnson. In it, he pointed out that the person who should know best, Stan Sayres, had testified under oath to the U.S. Tax Court in 1956 that Ted Jones was the designer.

Wherever the truth might lie on the issue, there is no argument from either side that building the *Slo-mo-shun IV* was a significant challenge. With Sayres serving as referee,

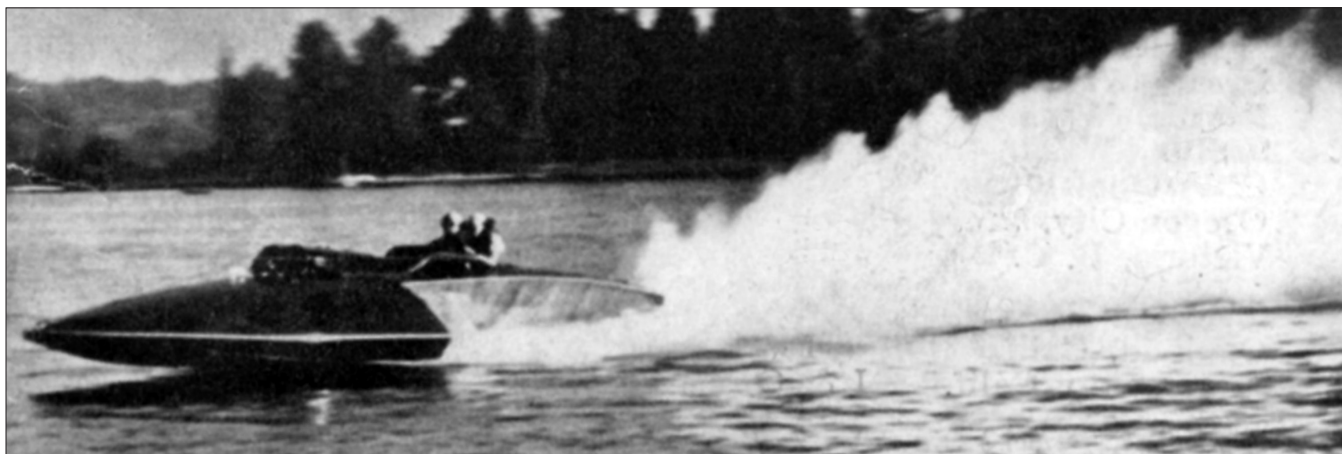
Jensen and Jones argued over every detail. And, because of the bickering, the project that should have taken three or four months to complete instead stretched on for an excruciating year, and beyond.

Construction of *Slo-mo-shun IV* finally ended in October 1949 and the result was stunning. From its side, the dark mahogany deck formed a graceful, low arch that started from its slightly pointed bow, became thickest at a point near the powerful Allison engine, then curved downward again to the transom. Viewed from the front, the curved deck and the angle of the sponsons gave it the appearance

of a flying saucer. The structure inside was made of oak and spruce, marine plywood formed the outside shell, and the running surfaces were clad in aluminum.

Initial tests showed that the prop-riding concept to be everything Jones had hoped, which meant that everything was in place for an attempt on the water speed record, which stood at 141.740 miles per hour, thanks to the effort of Sir Malcolm Campbell while driving his *Bluebird II* in 1939. Officials from the American Power Boat Association surveyed a mile course off the Sand Point Naval Station, which occupied a wide piece of land that jutted into Lake Washington toward the north end of the lake, installed and tested the timing equipment, and secured people to operate patrol boats and help keep the waters clear of spectators.

Then, after a few days of frustration caused by rough water and a broken propeller, the morning of Monday, June 26, 1950, dawned with perfect conditions. A faint, cool breeze kicked-up only a slight chop on the lake, ideal for allowing just enough air under the hull to give *Slo-mo IV* the most effective run possible.



The *Slo-mo IV* during one of its initial test runs on Lake Washington. Note that its tail fin has yet to be installed.

The crewmembers, along with a crowd of reporters and others who had a hand in the building of the boat, assembled at Stan Sayres' waterfront home on Hunts Point, a narrow peninsula on the east side of the lake, where *Slo-mo-shun IV* sat ready to make the run. Before long, a gantry crane inside the boathouse lifted the hydroplane off its cradle, hoisted it outside, and lowered it onto the lake next to the dock where Stan Sayres, Ted Jones, Anchor Jensen, and the others all stood. About half past six o'clock, Jones climbed into the cockpit next to Sayres, who sat on the right-hand side behind the steering wheel, they waved to the crowd, the Allison engine roared to life, and *Slo-mo IV* cruised north toward Sand Point.

With its roostertail flying, *Slo-mo IV* raced south toward the north timer and, at the point that the boat crossed the opening of the mile course, the clock started with a click—five seconds, 10, 15, 20—then it clicked again when the boat crossed the one-mile mark. The time was 21.98 seconds, or 163.785 miles per hour. Then came the return run, which was timed at exactly 22.95 seconds, or 156.862



Sayres (with his hands on his ears) and Jones are congratulated by their crew after establishing the new world straightaway speed record on Lake Washington.

miles per hour, enough to give Sayres and Jones a two-run average of 160.3235 miles per hour. The *Slo-mo-shun IV* had beat Sir Malcolm Campbell's record by nearly 20 miles per hour!

News of the new world record made a big splash throughout the boating world, but especially in Detroit, where a headline in the *Detroit News* announced: "Boat Going 160 mph Just A Blur, Detroit is Next Stop." A week later, the *Slo-mo IV* was loaded on the back of a flatbed truck and headed east to the Motor City. When it arrived, a small army of newspaper reporters and other

curious fans marveled over the new craft. Sleeker and with smoother lines than the other boats, the thing looked fast just sitting on its trailer.

Despite the boat's obvious credentials, there were a few disbelievers in the crowd. Though the odds makers agreed the boat had remarkable straightaway speed, they still weren't convinced the boat could beat the hometown favorites. Doing a mile straightaway run on smooth water and racing around an oval course in the midst of competition and on the rough water of the Detroit River were two completely different matters, they reasoned.

But, race day, July 22, proved otherwise. During the first heat, Jones crossed the starting line in third place, but drove the *Slo-mo IV* into the lead by the time the boats emerged from the turn and was never threatened. In fact, it lapped the second place *My Sweetie* just before crossing the finish line.

In the second heat, Lou Fageol and *My Sweetie* and actually led *Slo-mo IV* through most of the race. But midway through the final lap, the engine in *My Sweetie's* overheated and went silent, allowing Ted Jones



Soon after setting the world speed record, the *Slo-mo-shun IV* was loaded on a trailer and driven to Detroit to challenge for the 1950 Gold Cup.



[Top] The *Slo-mo-shun IV* being towed through the marina at the Detroit Yacht Club.
[Above] The Grand Old Lady on its way to victory in the 1950 Gold Cup.

another victory. Then in the final, with the outcome all but assured, Jones passed Guy Lombardo in the first turn, giving him a little hosing with his roostertail in the process, and cruised to an easy victory. Not only did Jones win the Gold Cup, but in the process also established a new heat record of 80.897 miles per hour and a new 90-mile race record of 78.216 miles per hour.

The victory meant that the prestigious Gold Cup race would be hosted in Seattle the following year.

Six weeks later, the *Slo-mo-shun IV* was back on the Detroit River as part of the United States team defending the Harmsworth Trophy

from a challenge by *Miss Canada IV*. With Lou Fageol in the driver's seat because Jones had broken his wrist the week before, the *Slo-mo IV* sped to an easy victory on the first day of racing, then averaged 100.180 miles per hour on the second day, becoming the first boat to ever average more than 100 miles per hour in a heat.

Upon their return from the east, with Gold Cup and British International trophies in hand, Stan Sayres and Ted Jones were immediately hailed as civic heroes. Meanwhile, 2,500 miles to the east, the Detroit race teams were resolved to set things right again and take

the Gold Cup back to where it had been for so many years. As the date of the race approached, boats such as *Miss Pepsi*, *Such Crust*, *Hornet*, *Gale II*, and *My Sweetie*, were loaded onto trailers and, like pioneers on the Oregon Trail, set off in a convoy headed west, a pilot car leading the way and a chase car following behind. After four full days crossing the hot Northern Plains in late July and then over the Rocky Mountains, with the caravan sometimes creeping along at a pace barely faster than a person could walk, they finally arrived at the shore of Lake Washington, where a three-mile course was set just south of the city's famous floating bridge.

That's when they learned that Stan Sayres, Ted Jones, and Anchor Jensen had a surprise. Another new hydroplane had taken shape up in the loft of Anchor Jensen's old building on Portage Bay. While *Slo-mo-shun IV* had certainly become the most proficient race boat yet built, Jones saw room for improvement, so he designed a new boat



Ted Jones accepts the Gold Cup trophy.



The *Slo-mo IV*, above, and its younger sister the *Slo-mo-shun V* before the 1951 Gold Cup in Seattle.

that would be lighter and faster. It was the same length, used the same power plant, and had the same mahogany color as its sister (though it would have a yellow cowling instead of red), but instead of being proficient at straightaway runs like *Slo-mo IV*, the new boat had been designed with competition more in mind, sporting different sponsons and a slightly different hull shape to give it greater lift. They called it, naturally, *Slo-mo-shun V*.

The boat made its debut 18 days before the big event. Tests showed it to be faster than its older sister coming out of the turns, but that it also lacked stability in the straightaways. While *Slo-mo IV* could easily reach 185 miles per hour, the bow of the new boat showed an alarming tendency to rise when it reached 165 miles per hour. Its driver would have to watch that carefully.

The first Gold Cup race held west of the Mississippi River arrived on Saturday, August 4, a day that was typical for the Pacific Northwest: cloudy and mild in the morning then warm and sunny by early afternoon. A crowd estimated

at a quarter million people jockeyed for position to get a good view of the course.

Shortly after noon, a cannon blasted a warning to the competitors that the first heat was about to begin and soon the big hydroplanes rumbled onto the course, including the two hometown favorites with Ted Jones in *Slo-mo-shun IV* and Lou Fageol in the new *Slo-mo-shun V*. The massive crowd cheered wildly as the pair cruised around the buoys, then they passed under the western approach to the floating bridge, as if they were

heading back to their boathouse a mile north in the city's Leschi district. As the clock ticked down toward the start, the drivers tromped down on the throttles of their race boats and began to form up for the run to the starting line. The resulting roar was loud enough to be heard several miles away in Renton and downtown Seattle. But, the local heroes were not among them.

Then, seemingly at the last second, *Slo-mo V* suddenly blasted from under the bridge at top speed with its older sister following immediately behind, their white roostertails soaring high into the air. While Jones veered to the left in an attempt to pass the other boats to the inside, Fageol veered to the right, passed the others on the outside, hit the starting line the instant the starting gun fired, and flew toward the south turn, out accelerating all but *Miss Pepsi*.

Behind the wheel of the *Miss Pepsi*, Chuck Thompson held a position close to the *Slo-mo V* through the first three laps. Fageol sometimes pulled ahead by maybe 150 yards and then *Miss Pepsi* would cut that gap in half. On the fourth



From the left, Joe Taggart, Lou Fageol, and Stan Sayres.

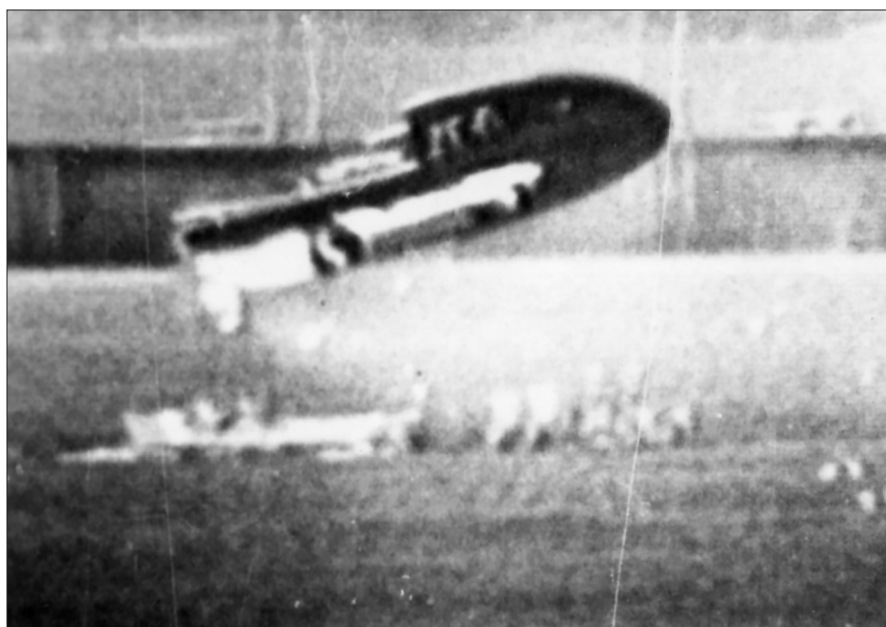
lap, however, one of the engines in *Miss Pepsi* suddenly sputtered, coughed, and went silent, leaving the heat victory to *Slo-mo V*.

Fageol began the second heat like he had the first, with the same “flying start” from under the west approach span of the floating bridge. Thompson also did like he had done during the first heat and grabbed a spot at the heels of *Slo-mo V*. But the battle didn’t last long. A crankshaft broke on *Miss Pepsi* before it reached the first turn. Danny Foster valiantly tried to keep his *Hornet* within striking distance of *Slo-mo V*, but by the fourth lap, the eventual order of finish had been established, with Fageol comfortably in the lead. Going into the final heat, therefore, Fageol and *Slo-mo V* had a 200-point lead over *Hornet*.

As it turned out, that’s all it needed. Just two laps into the final heat, a boat named *Quicksilver* suddenly leaped into the air, disintegrated into a geyser of spray as it hit the surface of Lake Washington, and sank to the bottom, taking the lives of driver Orth Mathiot and his riding mechanic, Thompson Whittaker. Race officials quickly stopped the event and declared Lou Fageol the winner.

The victory by *Slo-mo V* meant the Gold Cup would stay in Seattle, so the dejected Detroit teams packed their gear and headed back across the mountains and plains with the disheartening realization that they would now be compelled to make the long trek to that far corner of the nation at least one more time.

The routine stayed the same for the next three years, with a caravan of trucks, trailers, and boats making the long, hot journey west from Detroit hoping to win back the



During a qualifying run before the 1955 Gold Cup, the *Slo-mo V* did a complete backflip and landed right-side up.

KING Broadcasting

Gold Cup, and then returning disappointed over those same highways. In 1952, Stanley Dollar upheld Seattle’s honor in *Slo-mo-shun IV* and, in 1953, Joe Taggart and Lou Fageol teamed up to make it two in a row for the “Grand Old Lady,” thus making the boat only the second in history to win three Gold Cup victories. In 1954, the *Slo-mo-shun V* took another turn in the winner’s circle with Lou Fageol doing the driving. In addition, on July 7, 1952, Sayres climbed into the cockpit of *Slo-mo-shun IV* and ran the boat through a mile course at 178.497 miles per hour: another world record.

Seattle residents continued to burst with pride and the gushing over the *Slo-mo* boats reached such a proportion that national celebrities got into the act. Television personality Art Linkletter, TV bandleader Lawrence Welk, and the conductor of the Boston Pops, Arthur Fiedler, all asked to take a ride in the boat. National television audiences also took spins around Lake Washington with Art Baker’s

“You Asked For It” and with Arlene Francis of NBC’s “Today” show. In a feature article in *Life* magazine, a writer described Stan Sayres as a man with everything: “Money, guts and ability ... he’s fit and looks it.”

But, the fortunes of the team would soon change. In 1955, Lou Fageol was driving the *Slo-mo V* in a qualifying run before yet another Seattle Gold Cup when the boat suddenly began to dance from sponson to sponson, then the bow climbed higher ... and higher ... and higher until the entire boat became airborne. Like an airplane doing a graceful loop at an air show, the boat climbed until it turned upside-down and backwards a good 20 feet above the water and then dropped its nose and completed the maneuver with a perfect landing, right-side-up and still running. The boat putt-putted a few hundred feet and went dead in the water. As for Fageol, when rescuers arrived on the scene, they found him floating amid the seat cushions and other debris, badly bruised from head to toe, but still conscious. He had

been snapped out of his seat without hitting the steering wheel, the windscreen, or the cowling.

Lee Schoenith won the Gold Cup that year in *Gale V* and took the trophy back to Detroit, where the prestigious race would be held on the Detroit River again the following summer. For that event, Stan Sayres decided he would take his *Slo-mo IV* back to the place where it had made history six years before.

Tragically, this time the visit would have a much different result. Early in the morning on the second day of qualifying before the 1956 Gold Cup, Joe Taggart decided to take *Slo-mo IV* on a test run. At about the same time, the skipper of a police harbor master boat decided he needed a cup of coffee. So, as the famous old boat roared around the Detroit River course, the police boat headed full speed parallel to the course toward the Detroit Yacht Club, leaving behind a steep wake that fanned out onto the course. *Slo-mo IV* was going about 150 miles per hour when its left sponson climbed one of those waves, which pitched the hull over onto its side as though it had climbed a ramp at an automobile thrill show. The boat bounced twice, then its right sponson dug into the water and, in an instant, Seattle's "Grand Old Lady" exploded into a thousand bits of mahogany, spruce, and aluminum. Taggart was thrown through the dashboard, taking the steering wheel, the control panel, and parts of the deck with him, and landed about 50 feet away with one leg and an arm broken. As for the boat, it became a tangled mess of broken stringers, shattered cowling, and twisted plumbing.

The *Slo-mo-shun* era had come to an end.

Seattle's passion for unlimited hydroplane racing became obvious with the demise of the beloved *Slo-mo-shun IV*. The battered remains were hauled back to Seattle and placed on display in the parking lot of KING Broadcasting, where hundreds of mourners filed past to pay their final respects. The sight of the once gleaming boat, with most of its deck shredded off and its insides mangled, brought tears to most of those filing past. Some

grown men openly wept.

Then the sadness became more real. Stan Sayres, the man who had brought the sport to Seattle, was so distraught by the accident that he couldn't bear to look at his wrecked boat. Instead, he retreated to his home at Hunt's Point and, only three weeks after the accident, quietly died in his sleep. The doctors said it had been a heart attack, but others maintained that the demise of his famous *Slo-mo IV* had literally broken his heart.



William Ditzik



Bob Carver

[Top] The demolished *Slo-mo IV* after it was towed back to the pits following its crash on the Detroit River in 1956. [Above] When the battered hull was returned to Seattle, thousands of race fans paid their respects to the Grand Old Lady.

A conversation with Don Ibsen.

Continued from page 1.

How did you become involved with hydroplanes? What was your first experience with them?

We lived on Evergreen Point [on the east side of Lake Washington – Ed.]. Every now and then I could hear this sound out on the lake, this rrrr, rrrr, rrrr sound. I was about 13, 14, and 15. My dad was in the water ski side, Stan Sayres was on the boat side. Stan Sayres had a runabout and every now and then they would have a marathon water ski race on Lake Washington, or a race from Seattle to Anacortes. Stan's boat, this big, long Seaflow, was used to tow water skiers. That was the connection where dad and Stan met. Dad, with his business, would travel back to Detroit. Stan would say, "Hey, Don, while you're back there I want you to pick up this car and break it in for me. My private car. When you come back to Seattle, by the time you get here, it'll be broken in." So dad would do that. One spring day, when I was 15 years old, dad went over to Stan's while they were testing. It was in the early spring. So dad went for a ride and Stan drove, then I went for a ride and Ted Jones drove.

What year would that have been?

That would have been '51.

So the boat had already been to the Gold Cup and won.

Right, yeah. So, you know, 140 miles an hour, whatever it was, I think Ted said it was 160, but I said that's world record speed so I don't

think we went quite that fast, but anyway, I'll never forget the strap between your legs and you hold on here (gestures) and another thing you held over here, and that held you in the boat, you know?

Yeah.

But as a young kid, seeing that go by that fast was just... I got out of the boat with butterflies in my stomach. But then I really had the bug, obviously. I had a little outboard, I would run my outboard over to Stan's the rest of that spring and summer and watch him test. So Stan, by that time, and Ted, knew me and of course I met some of the crew guys. So I'm there watching him test one day. I'm standing on the dock. Stan just casually walks over to me and he says, "Donnie, would you like to be on the crew?" And, you know, I was 16 years old

at that point and it's like, what's a 16-year old kid gonna say when he's in the world's fastest boat and race team? "Let me think about it, Stan, you know I've got a lot on my table, you know." No way, no way! So, they got me coveralls and it started from there.

We've heard your first involvement was when they did the 1952 record run. Were you actually involved in '51 to some extent?

No, I started with the spring of '52.

Did your dad work on the crew at all?

No, no.

When you worked on it in spring, were you going down to his place and working evenings with the crew, or...



The *Slo-mo-shun IV* on the monorail as it is being hoisted from the shop at Stan Sayres' home on Hunt's Point.

Arne Jensen



The *Slo-mo IV* during a test run on Lake Washington off Hunt's Point.

I was, from that point forward, whenever the boat was running. The crew, for the most part, they were not employed. They were volunteers so they had their Boeing jobs and all these other jobs. On weekends we were pretty heavy with the boat so I would be over there every weekend at Stan's place. I mean, you think back now, today's world, having a place like that and both boats were in the boathouse. You had the nice shop. We could do all the work. Monorail to pull the boats in and out, drop 'em in the water, do your testing, go back in. You could run down to the bay and make a circle, come back out. Now days you couldn't do that because the laws wouldn't allow it.

Of course, there's a lot more boat traffic on the lake.

Well, that's a bit of it, too, yeah.

And the Highway 520 bridge hadn't been built.

Correct.

You had a lot more room to maneuver.

So I started off just, I guess you

could say, tool boy. Got two boats and crews are working on both of 'em. You know, "I need a 5/32 blah, blah, blah." And I learned the whole tool box, all the tools, sizes, and all that. I had to be very efficient, quick. I learned it from the ground up. Of course, if there was oil in the bilge after they pulled the engine out, I cleaned the bilge. I can even remember the inside of the sponsons. We had a cover that was maybe 14 inches diameter. I can remember when I was very thin and skinny, and I still am, I guess, but I would have to crawl all the way in the sponson and leaning on all the stringers, you know, and get up in. And, of course, it narrows as you go forward.

Sure.

And if you had claustrophobia you wouldn't be able to do this. I had a bucket, or a pan of varnish and I would varnish every surface that I could see up inside there and work my way back. They had a vacuum cleaner, on the blower end, and a scupper up on the bow, blowing in there to keep the air moving through, otherwise you might pass out from the fumes. So I would work my way back and sometimes

they'd have to grab my feet and pull me. Work my way back painting and varnishing all the way, whole thing. That's the kind of stuff I did in those very early days. Then, as I progressed and learned more and more, in the winter time, I would be up at Stan Sayres' business where we kept the engines and we would rebuild engines. So I was there helping him rebuild, and do all that kind of stuff. I was learning from A to Z, the whole thing.

Did they separate some of the tasks for the *Slo-mo IV* and *V* or did the guys work on both boats interchangeably?

Well, yes and no. I mean, it depends on the situation. If they were overloaded and needing some help on one, they would shift over, back-up. But, on the normal, we had two different crew chiefs. Four and Five had different crew chiefs and they had their own guys. But, you know, there's nothing to swap back and forth. But Schobert was in charge of Five and Welsch was in charge of Four.

Did any particular crewmembers mentor you during this several year period?

All these guys were wonderful to work for. I mean, it's none of them can I say, "Aw, he was an S.O.B. or something like that." They were all just the neatest guys to work for. I kinda found a new family, if you want to call it that, with these guys. They all had their own personalities. They were all very kind and generous. Some of 'em had a little harsher personality, but they were just nice guys, you know? Maybe they got itched a little easier than

others. The world could be falling on their head and they would just have a smile on their face.

Are you the surviving member of this group of people?

I could be, I could be.

Did you develop a special skill on motors or propellers or how the drive shaft works, or a jack-of-all trades?

All of it. I learned it inside and out. It was a wonderful, wonderful experience. I was on the prop side, the stern of the boat, I was on the engine side working. I was hull, I was all over the whole thing. But I can remember Mike Welsch, he had a great saying and this is not so much with the every day working on the boat, but if you were in the pits on race day he would say, "Anybody who can keep a level head in all this confusion just doesn't understand the situation." I just loved that statement.

Saw Welsch at Sonics games. He would recognize you from hanging around the pits. "Hi, ya, smiley, hi, ya, smiley." His wife, Mildred, said everybody was smiley.

Well, it was interesting. You know, I can remember when kids were draggin' these hydroplanes behind their bikes.

Yeah, we did that.

I can remember, gosh, I don't have to drag a boat behind my bicycle. I'm working on the boat! It was like, whoa, hello. I was really blessed. I was actually really blessed. Somebody else was down at the



Stan Sayres during a discussion with his crew.

Seattle Yacht Club last week and they walked up the stairs and they saw my picture up there with the crew. She emailed me and I said, "That's been up there for a number of years, that's not a short-term exhibit. That's been there kind of a permanent thing." Then I explained to her about Stan and Edgar Kaiser and Ole Bardahl were all Seattle Yacht Club members.

Club royalty in those days.

Oh, my gosh, yeah. I got some of the Seattle Yacht Club membership books showing Stan and then the hydroplanes on the front covers and all that sort of stuff. But this crew, there were some that came early and stayed with it, then there were some that came in the middle years, and then some came on toward the end of the *Slo-mo* years. But it's just kind of interesting, the different backgrounds that their actual day jobs were.

When someone wanted to join the crew was that person interviewed to find out what kind of skills they had?

What I would say, there were quite a few guys that worked for Boeing. And of course, what happened at Boeing is somebody would come up, "Oh, you work on the crew? Do they need any other members?" And they'd say yes, no, whatever. I don't think there was too much interviewing. I mean, if the person had some particular skill... We had one guy who was very, very sharp on the electronics end of it. I would say he built one of the first unlimited hydroplane readout systems, with a movie camera, with all the dials, everything, right in front of the camera. You could go out and test, come back in and review it. It was pre the computer age, you know. Very fundamental but it would tell you boat speed, time, acceleration, rpm. The whole thing was right there. You could see how it was doing. That prop, or that prop, or that prop, or with this change in systems, all sorts of things.

When they started trying to get the Rolls engines, there was one report they got the engine out of *Quicksilver*. Do you know if that was so?

I never heard that. I'll tell you where it came from. Fageol worked it out.

Which engine?

The first Rolls. We had Allison originally. So we converted over. Lou Fageol was the background and pusher to get us started on that.

Did they acquire the engines from Fageol, or who?

Where did Lou get it from? I forget, he probably had a source because he was in the automotive industry.

Fageol Motors.

Right, and he was doing hydro-planes before he came to *Slo-mo*. So he knew those engine connections. You know why they made the changeover, don't you?

Well, not exactly.

The Rolls is a slightly smaller engine cubic inch-wise.

OK. Blower...

Now what happened, this goes back to World War II. They needed an

engine in the P-51 that would climb to high altitude quickly. The blower on the front end of the Rolls had much more successful performance at high altitude than the Allison did. That's why the change, that was the change.

And that was applicable to the boats.

Oh, yeah. Now obviously, the boat's running at sea level, but you get your pressure up quicker, and that's what they were looking for.

Accelerating faster.

Yeah. And of course they did use boost. Water-alcohol injection and that sort of thing.

They were doing that on the *Slo-mos*?

Oh, yeah, yeah.

OK.

Well, you know, *Slo-mo*, one thing that's really fascinating... Because it had set the world record in Seattle, then went back and won the Gold Cup, all of the people that were accessory people, Champion Spark

Plug, Mobil Gas, all these different companies, they got magnet pulls to (the) *Slo-mos*. And if it was a spark plug problem, here's a guy from Champion right there to show you. He'd get his little magnifying glass, "You need to do this, you need to change this," that sort of thing. And the fuel, the same thing. Make sure it was 140 octane, so forth. We had the top and the best people working right alongside of us there.

There were magazine ads that the *Slo-mos* had Monel steel for their shafts.

Yes, yeah. It was a bunch of top notch people, you know, it really was.

Talk about Ted Jones. Ted Jones designs a boat, Anchor Jensen builds it, then we come to the controversy. Ted Jones just had an idea on a back of an envelope or matchbook. Anchor Jensen designed it and measured the ribs and stringers and battens. Big controversy there. Talk about Ted Jones from your memory and talk about any controversy on who designed the boats.

Let's start with personalities. I think that really plays into this. Anchor Jensen was a no nonsense, put your nose to the grindstone figure out the best possible construction design, the one that's gonna be the strongest for the weight, all that sort of thing. Wasn't interested in any acknowledgement, you know, he just got the boat built well and everybody's happy, I'm happy kind of guy. You don't have to get the press in front of me. Ted Jones' flair was more flamboyant. He was, by nature, a more flamboyant guy. And



Kirk Johnson

yes, he worked his way up through hydroplanes, the limited hydros, and experience with build, with construction, probably, and design and all. I would probably say he may have drawn out the boat's original design and all that. I would love to have the blueprint of his original design, whatever that was.

Could he loft the boat, do all that?

Drafting, you talking drafting it?

Yeah, the stringers and...

That's why I say I'd love to see if there was ever a full-scale drawing, inch for inch that he said, "OK, here it is, build it." I've never heard that that was done.

Yeah.

Now I'm thinking it was more a kind of compilation of Ted and Anchor, you know. Here's what this limited hydro looks like and here's what the unlimiteds look like on the East Coast and then, you know, get some aerodynamic effects working here and what about this, and what Ted learned from limiteds and what works and what doesn't work. I would be willing to bet that there was compromising going on all the time that, whatever design was originally set up and whatever construction was set up, I think, uh, I would say that when it came to the actual construction that Ted probably deferred to Anchor.

OK.

I think, I mean, Anchor probably saw construction and what it looked like back in the east on limiteds and all the rest. Then you

take the construction techniques that were available at the time and the type of fasteners and the type of, well, you know the story about the plywood on the hull.

Well, not completely.

Well, they went through extreme changes. Most plywood is laid out at 90 degrees to each laminate, OK? These were laid at 45. All the laminates were 45 degrees to each other, so it was stronger. They went to a plywood company. I don't know if it was in Anacortes or in Seattle, but some place locally and these custom 45-degree lay-up plywoods were made of mahogany. Apparently that also laid over the hull, worked the curvature. The compound bends worked a lot better with the 45 than they did with the 90. So it was stronger, but very expensive to make. I don't know the cost of plywood but, uh, so that was kind of a detail that Anchor and Ted and Stan all worked out, to be stronger. But, Ted, you know, he took me for my first ride in *Slo-mo IV*, which itself was an honor. I think what happened with Ted over the long run was he, um, kind of like [Howard] Gidovlenko in another way, when the rubber meets the road, he wasn't quite there, on the on-going, you know? Although he did drive in the Gold Cup back in Detroit and all. But, there was a falling out that the crew and Ted had over personalities. Or maybe Ted was overplaying his abilities and the crew was saying, "Naw, naw, naw, naw, that wasn't you, Ted, that was him or him or him," you know, that kind of thing. You know, personalities do get in the way sometimes.

He seemed to have a contract with Sayres and when he stepped away from the Sayres operation there was almost a, "You can't build any boats for anybody else for a couple years," by legal document.

As far as that legal bit, I was never in any offices or heard anything about, you know, here's the contract. Whether that was just a de facto thing or whether it was in fact in writing, I can't speak to it either way. I don't know if any legal document was drawn up on that level or if it was just hearsay. A lot of things happen over time where there's the shoptalk and then there's the real talk.

1953 was the year *Slo-mo V* broke a prop, twisted the shaft, and started to sink, just before the Gold Cup.

Right in front of our boathouse.

Did the crew make any effort to try to dry it out and hope they could fix it and run it?

Oh, did we ever, did we ever. That was a 24/7. It happened closer to Cozy Corner, it's the bay that's between Yarrow and Hunt's points, called Cozy Cove. It happened closer to Yarrow Point. He went down in the bay, made a circle, was coming out and all of a sudden, "Bang!" So then we hopped in the runabout and got over there. Of course, the boat was sinking, stern down. You've seen pictures of that shaft?

Yeah, and other shafts.

It was just, you know, all curls. It tore the steering out and the strut,

the whole thing. So here's what we did. We hooked the boat onto the back of the Seaflow and before it sank we started towing it. Of course, the water's going out the stern now. We're semi-planing, the bow's up. So we're going through the ship canal with a big wake, over speed limit. *Slo-mo V*, you can go as fast as you want now. Somehow they had somebody call ahead to Jensen Motor Boat so that they had the crane out. He had a monorail and they had the cables down, ready. So we came in and made a loop and as it started to sink again we were underneath and they hooked onto the boat and started pulling it out. That was a 24/7 for three or four days getting that boat back. I mean, I'm tired just thinkin' about it!

That was the year Taggart and Fageol switched off in *Slo-mo IV*.

Yes, they were trading back and forth, I do know that. I think that was the year *Slo-mo IV* had the new Boeing tail. Vertical tail, which was a fiberglass tail.

It was a plastic tail fin.

Yeah, yeah.

After the Gold Cup in '53 they made a decision to take *Slo-mo V* east. The IV didn't go. Do you know why they chose the V and not the IV?

(Long pause) Well, probably it came down to simply we're gonna take one boat, we're not gonna take both. I think they figured Fageol and V would be the better choice.

A little faster?



Lou Fageol accepts the President's Cup Trophy from President Dwight Eisenhower.

Hydroplane and Raceboat Museum

Yeah, I think they figured that, yeah.

They traded off engines, they ran mostly Rolls back east, but there's a photo someone has of that boat at one of the races and it had an Allison back in it.

I would almost think it may have been a picture of the year before when all they were running was Allison. If they could document that year... I can't say for sure what happened the same year, they were swapping Allison for Rolls. I just don't know, I'm not going to say one way or the other on that.

You were there when they won the President's Cup in '53.

Yes, yes. We flew in a Boeing Stratocruiser, which was a four engine, kind of a double body-type of upper and lower deck kind of thing.

What do you remember from that race?

Well, that was back in the day when the president actually awarded the trophy. That was pretty impressive. I mean, right there on the Potomac, you know. That was very special. That was Eisenhower, I think.

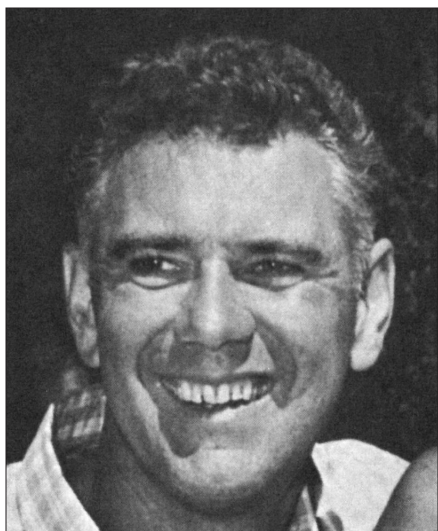
Yeah, yeah. It didn't do as well at the Silver Cup in Detroit. Didn't win there, didn't win at New Martinsville. Those were the three races it went to.

Right. I think I was back in school by then. That was later in summer and school was starting.

If we can back up a little, in '52, Stan Dollar was the driver of *Slo-mo IV*. How was he as a driver to work with? Of course, he had experience racing before that. *Skip-A-Long*.

That was a boat he drove, *Skip-A-Long*, yeah.

Won the Harmsworth before you guys did.



[Above] Stanley Dollar
[Right] The all-aluminum
Skip-A-Long.

Yeah. All-aluminum hull. And the front sponsons looked like it was wings that were just clipped off. It was just a strange looking hull. And I think it did skip-a-long, too. I'll tell you, of all the drivers, I don't know what was in his gut but he was the most calm, relaxed driver and a true gentleman. The guy was of means, obviously, but whether it was me or a crewmember or Stan, he was equal. You're all just an equal level for him. He had a very cool head. I mean, Jack Regas was pretty phoenitic, if you want to use it that way. He was a pretty excitable guy. He [Dollar] could've had a bottle of Coca-Cola sitting while he was driving. He was a personable guy, he was just a sweetheart. He was just a neat guy. And a good driver, you know, and so cooperative. I will tell you, all of these drivers they knew that they were driving a very supreme, record-setting boat. And a good crew, you know. They just felt the privilege was theirs to be with the crew and to be with the boats. They expressed that so much. The only person that was really, uh, I guess, he was a good man but



he wasn't sure about driving the *Slo-mos*, that was Paul Sawyer. He tried out in the spring and his wife was there with him and, as opposed to Stan Dollar, who was cool, you could tell that he wasn't. Sawyer wasn't sure this is what he wanted to do. I think he had a certain fear level.

Sawyer was the first limited hydroplane driver member of the One Hundred Mile and Hour Club, *Alter Ego*.

Yes, yes, he had a good record.

He had quite a reputation for speed.

Absolutely. But when he got to *Slo-mo* you could see, he'd come back in and he would kind of talk to his wife.

Do I really want to go this fast?

Yeah. I don't know what he had in his background because I don't know what he was looking for or what he wasn't looking for. I mean, good man, nice guy, but he just finally, right there in the boathouse one day he said, "You know, we've made a decision. I appreciate the trial, but we're gonna have to beg off." I think that's when Joe Taggart

was pulled for us. Taggart came out.

He had been out here in '52 and had driven.

Yes, one of the East Coast boats.

Yeah, *Miss Great Lakes II*.

Yeah.

Then in about '53 or something, Howard Gidovlenko did some work on the engines. When they pulled the Allisons.

Avia Union was his company.

When they pulled the Allison out of *Slo-mo IV*, and took it apart, did he use high-dome pistons or any other trick things?

I think Howard (sighs) how best can I say it about him? Howard was pretty good at a PR kind of thing, but I don't think he really had anything magic for the engines. He would like to let you think there was, and we, over time, we figured out, well, this guy is kind of buffaloing us along. And he didn't last very long. But he made claims that he was. And I guess he obviously had a repair shop or something down in California where he repaired Allisons and all that sort of thing,

but, yeah, he was, how would you say it? He wasn't "what you see is what you get."

Well, in '54 *Slo-mo V* won the Gold Cup again.

OK, yeah.

And the Four didn't run well that year. What were some of the problems?

Oh, boy! I'm trying to think back now whether we had a blown quill shaft or what it was. I don't remember what specifically it was. There are so many things, engine-wise, that could go wrong, but I can't tell you specifically it was this or that or whether we were over-revving it, blew a rod, or something along that line. I would say probably more blower problem, that's my guess.

What do you recall from Bill Cantrell running up into the rose garden with *Gale IV*?

There was a question mark, at least in our crew, whether he was really trying to block off *Slo-mo IV* or *V*. Just got out of control and ended up on the beach. He was going, I

mean, he was paralleling the bridge coming around the corner and the boats were going underneath and he was... I can't remember if he was ahead of or behind, I think he was probably behind, but as they went through it, he's behind, you know, and then they continue straight ahead. Now they said he had rudder problems. Well, greater problems cover for him.

Yeah, Cantrell said, "First time I ever walked home from a boat race," and he walked back to the pits.

Well, first time he walked to a beach party, too. (Laughter.) Our crew boat was probably a dock down from where he went up on the lawn. So, we watched *Slo-mo* come under the bridge and then the next thing we saw this boat's going straight for the bank. I think the good news is he's backed off enough, 'cause that was probably a bulkhead like so (gestures) and if he was up on a plane, he would've hit the bulkhead. But he backed off enough the bow was up and he just hopped up over the rocks.

How would you compare Taggart's

driving with Fageol or Stan Dollar. If you could put them all three together and compare their style and what they tried to get from the boat, ability to work with the crew and communicate.

Really good question. You know, personalities come into this as well as skill. It's very, very interesting. I would say, one person, Fageol might tend to over-drive the boat, little bit farther on the edge than the other two. As far as getting around the course, boy, I would say they were very similar. I mean, it's really apples for apples almost. One might have a little bit better control over this much but not that much, you know. None of them were Jack Regas, I can tell you that. Jack Regas had a sense of driving that was, ah, these guys all had a little bit more sense about living longer, I think.

Mmmm.

I can narrow it down to that, you know. How far do you want to hang it out? But they were, I'd say, that they were all fairly well controlled fast drivers. Yet, you know, really not hangin' it out to the real edge. Good drivers. They wouldn't have been in the boat if they weren't good drivers, 'cause Stan and the crew would have said, "You're not doing what we want." So they were all good drivers. But I would say, very, very similar. Got the job done. That's my assessment.

*This is the end of part one of the interview with Don Ibsen. Next month in part two he discusses the flip of *Slo-mo-shun V*, the wreck of *Slo-mo-shun IV* in 1956, and his experiences on the crew of *Hawaii Ka'i III* and *Miss Bardahl*.*



Bill Cantrell famously drove his *Gale IV* into a rose garden during the 1954 Gold Cup in Seattle.

Hydroplane and Raceboat Museum

Remembering former UNJ editor Michael Prophet.

Continued from page 3.

complicated in its day—a few black and white photos were included in each issue, plus each issue had to be formatted around our budget and the ever changing post office mailing and cost restraints. And, the editor also had to work with our printer.

No one in the UNJ leadership group wanted the layout editor job. I pleaded for someone to take on the job on an interim basis. The UNJ was in near crisis and teetering on the possibility of ceasing publication. Then Michael Prophet stepped up and saved the publication.

He admitted that English composition and grammar skills were not his strength, but he thought he could learn how to use PageMaker. So, he assumed both text editor and layout editor jobs. Without a seasoned text editor and proofreader, Michael also assumed more responsibility for each issue.

The January 2005 issue was the first to have Michael as both layout editor and text editor. He learned the technology quickly and always produced the publication on time for our printer. Frankly, it took the UNJ awhile to replace the story editor/fact checker and proofreader, so while the content of his first issues was strong, it took the UNJ awhile to give Michael optimum English composition and grammar proofreading support.

Over time, Michael's title was simplified to UNJ editor. And, besides being our editor, he wrote stories, from a piece about Shirley Mendelson McDonald and ShuShu, to the annual photo essays of Damage Report. He is maybe best

known for coining the term "Leland's Navy" in his definitive piece about Fred Leland's boats.

By 2010, UNJ leadership was convinced that it was time to transition away from print to the Internet. Editor Michael Prophet supported the move as it would allow longer issues, color photos, greater circulation, and lower overall costs. The last print issue was the June 2011 publication and in July 2011, with the support of UNJ webmaster Lon Erickson, the UNJ launched itself on the Internet.

With the transition to the Internet, Michael established new priorities. He strongly believed that photos should help tell the story and he greatly expanded their use, all the time expanding the UNJ database of photos. He left the grammar, spelling, and punctuation to proofreaders, but unlike in the print days where limited issue length was necessary, Michael was reluctant to cut text in stories. He stubbornly argued that many UNJ readers wanted all the facts and all the details.

After Michael's diagnosis with stage-four cancer, he diligently continued as editor of the UNJ. We all knew Michael was fighting for his life, but he was not one for self-pity. Occasionally, UNJ leadership would gently ask Michael about his health, and we'd be blown away with his reply. Usually it was, I'm doing okay, except for the two days I was in the hospital with a slight heart attack from the chemo, or a blood clot from the chemo, or a little stroke likely from the chemo. No complaints, no excuses, and each issue was ready on time.

Michael Prophet was the lead editor from January 2005 through December 2015. He was our longest serving editor. He always chuckled that this was the longest "interim job" he'd ever heard of!

Reluctantly, very reluctantly, Michael agreed to step down as the editor and become editor emeritus in January 2016 and served in that capacity until he died. During his time as editor emeritus, he helped with the transition to our new editor, put together hard drives full of photos for the UNJ, and continued to serve on the UNJ editorial board. He started scanning past UNJ print issues and uploading them to the UNJ cloud-space, as our goal is to eventually place all of our print issues on the UNJ webpage archive.

He jokingly said that he was trying to get a lot done before he croaked. He attended the February 2017 editorial board meeting, less than two weeks before he passed away.

For the entire UNJ leadership team, we thank Michael Prophet for all he did for our publication. We are better people because we were friends with him and he showed us all how to live in the face of adversity. I'm hopeful that Michael would be pleased with this piece; I tried not to leave out details, after all, Michael always argued that hydro fans want and deserve all the details. He's the man; he's the man!

Christopher Tracy, President
Unlimiteds Unanimous, publishers of
the Unlimited NewsJournal

HydroFile

Race Team News



Lon Erickson

U-1 Miss HomeStreet Bank

HomeStreet Bank colors were back on the boat in mid-March and systems were soon to be installed. Upgrades to the hull were done with carbon fiber, which brings strength, durability, and is lighter. Plus, if repairs are needed, they are easier to make with carbon fiber. The target goal is to have the boat done by mid-April and they plan to test it in June at Tri-Cities and at Lake Gunter'sville.

Miss Madison Race Team



Miss Madison Race Team



Miss Madison Race Team



U-5/U-7 Porter Racing

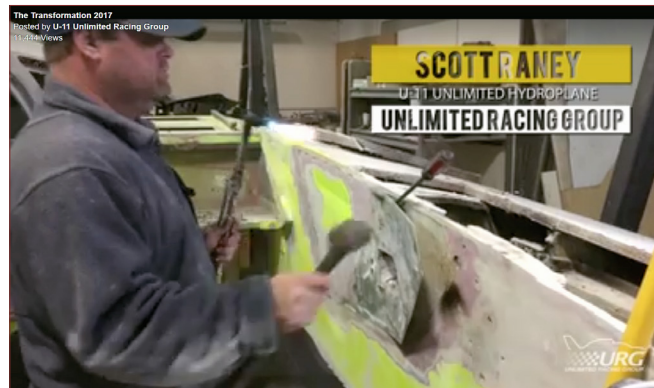
While rumors and speculation is rampant, we are still awaiting official word on the status and 2017 plans for the boats from Porter Racing.

U-11 Unlimited Racing Group

The U-11 shop has been a busy place this off season with extensive work being done on completing repairs to the original URG U-11 hull (#9302) that was heavily damaged in the 2013 Doha event.



Lon Erickson



U-18 Bucket List Racing

Kelly Stocklin and the U-18 crew continue with upgrades and new paint in the Bucket List shop, prepping for the 2017 season. They found some corrosion in an aftplane shoe area and made some repairs to that. Next up is new paint for the Bucket List racing hull.



Bucket List Racing



Bucket List Racing

U-27 Wiggins Racing

After getting their boat back on the water for the final event of the 2016 season in San Diego, the Wiggins Racing team now has the U-27 upside down in its Gadsden, Alabama, shop to go through the hull and make upgrades. The Wiggins team has also had their GP class hydro on display recently promoting the 2018 Guntersville Lake Hydrofest.



Wiggins Racing



Wiggins Racing

NEXT MEETING OF UNLIMITEDS UNANIMOUS

Sunday, April 9, 2017
Meeting starts at 2 p.m.

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

YOU ARE WELCOME TO ATTEND!