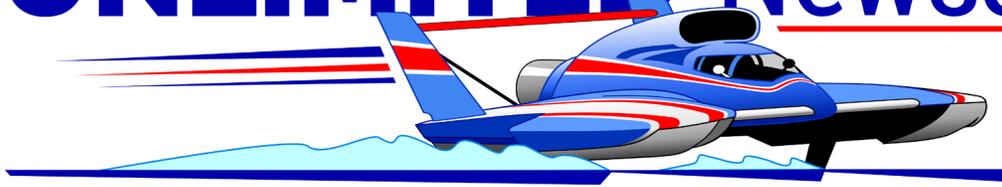


UNLIMITED NewsJournal

A CHRONICLE OF SPEED



MARCH 2023

FROM THE UNJ VAULT:

A season on the road with a low-budget team.



Hydroplane and Raceboat Museum

Prior to the 1977 season, the Unlimited Racing Commission made a number of rule changes designed to encourage low-budget boat owners to attend more races. As the season neared, it became obvious these owners were not going to hold up their end of the bargain. Only one low-budget owner made the entire circuit: Tad Dean, owner of U-22 *Dionysus*. Dean, at age 26, was the youngest owner in Unlimited racing. The owner of an auto body shop in Seattle, Dean got into the sport in the fall of 1975 when he purchased the former *Sunny Jim* from

ALSO IN THIS MONTH'S ISSUE:

10 A tropical try for the mile record
14 The 2023 Hydro Record Book

17 Book Review: Fifty 5 years
of hydroplane racing

18 HydroFile by Lon Erickson
20 Comment from H1 by Jan Shaw

Pete LaRock. It was the oldest hull still active in the sport, a boat built in 1957 that had seen action as with a number of names, including *Breathless II*, *Blue Chip*, *Miss Wickman*, and *Shakey's Special*. Dean moved his operation into the shop on Aurora Avenue that once housed the *U-95* team, hired a promising young rookie driver named Chip Hanauer, got a sponsorship deal from a local rock band, and went racing in 1976 with the boat named *Barney Armstrong's Machine*. Then, early in 1977, Dean decided he'd do the entire hydro circuit. That adventure started in May when he wrapped up his body shop business and hit the road for Miami—hydroplane in tow. The following is an account of what then happened during the summer of '77, as seen through the eyes of Tad Dean. The story was first published in the *Unlimited NewsJournal* in the October 1977 issue.

UNJ: What things were going on through your mind before you left Seattle?

Dean: The thing that was bothering me the most was getting all my body shop work done. I couldn't leave and not have everyone's car done. Then, where was I going to get the money together to make the trip? I figured once I got there, I could pick up a little tow money and I could make ends meet that way. I had to buy a new truck. I didn't want to take the diesel truck I had because that would cost too much. Insurance is terrible. I

had no idea it was so bad. Three months of insurance is \$900 [\$4,400 in today's dollars] to drive across the country.

Al Thoreson put your engines together...

Yeah. Two engines. Al is one of the best guys there is. He doesn't get the credit he deserves. His engines are flawless. Just perfect. I'd find little things safety wired on those engines that you'd never think of wiring. Inside the engines, all the little cotter pins are bent and turned a special way that he does it. Just beau-

tiful. The engines were identical twins, so in theory we could swap engines, not between heats, so much, but in a more reasonable length of time.

Didn't you have a problem with the shaft being jammed in the strut?

Right. A week before we left we started checking, making sure everything in the hull was just right. We came to find out the stringers in the boat were letting the bottom sag too much. It's a normal fatigue problem. Most of the honeycomb boats have had the bottom start dropping a little bit. So, we had to reinforce the shaft. That meant Al was up there for three days straight, getting the bottom strengthened back up. It was sure a shock. We were all ready. That was the week we were going to test the boat before we left. There was nothing we could do but start fixin'.

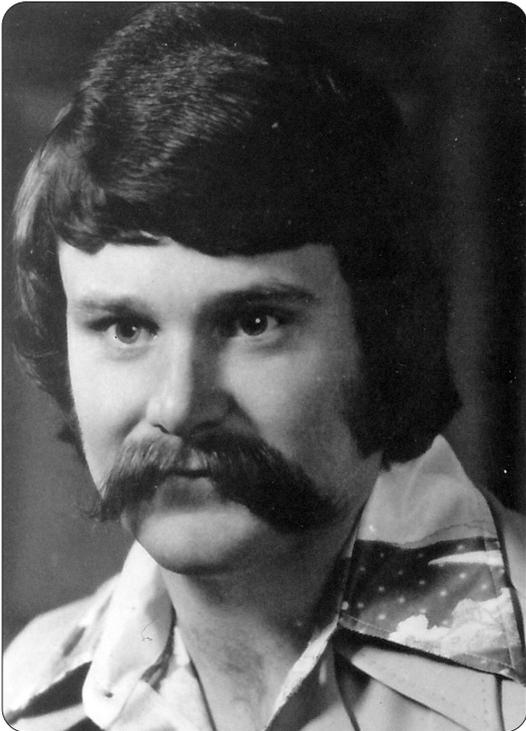
What did you take for a crew?

Al stayed home. Randy [Beauchamp] wanted to make the trip down there with us, and Art [Riff] wasn't doing anything this summer, so he said he would share the driving with me and stay on the whole trip. But in essence, that's all I took. Art had never worked on a boat. He learned over the year. He's pretty good now. I can send Art with the boat. He can get the engine in, all the hoses hooked up, everything ready to go.



Ted Dean purchased the former *Breathless II* late in 1975 then entered it in the 1976 season with the name *Barney Armstrong's Machine*. Chip Hanauer was the boat's driver. It was the first Unlimited that Hanauer drove in competition.

Hydroplane and Raceboat Museum



All I do is fire it up.

What was it like driving from Seattle to Miami?

The first thing after we left Seattle, I got real discouraged. We lost the heater in the truck right away at Snoqualmie Pass. It was a fairly new truck, but it had been sitting for a year and a half and the heater core went out. Then we got to Cle Elum and had a flat tire. I said if we had one more thing by the time we got to Spokane, I was going to think real seriously about turning back and bagging the

whole thing. But everything went good there.

We got to Idaho and all the permits started. It was \$15. Every state is different, some want you to pay by weight. And then, my truck doesn't hold much fuel, 30 gallons is all it holds, so that only gave us, at the most, 150 miles, and that's not enough in some places. We'd have to carry some cans in the back and stop and fuel it up on the road.

Then the tire problems started. After a while, we couldn't buy the sizes we wanted. We had to settle for smaller ones like motor home tires. They wouldn't cut it. I suppose over the season we bought somewhere between 15 and 18 tires.

That can't be normal.

No, no, that's not normal. Everybody buys two or three or four a year, but nobody buys 'em like I did! I couldn't buy the right ones anymore. They didn't make 'em.

Did you have any experiences with people who had never seen a hydroplane before?

Randy and Art told me this one. I was asleep at the time. I didn't eat dinner with them. They stopped at a regular truck stop. There was a place that said "truckers only." They just went in and sat down and were eating dinner. The waitress comes over and says, "Y'all drivin' a rig?" or something like that. Art and Randy said, "No, we're not truckers. We're just traveling through with a hydroplane." And all of a sudden all the truckers turned around and they got a big dirty look. She asked them to leave and go sit with the rest of the customers.

LEFT: Boat owner Tad Dean operated an auto body repair shop in the Ballard area of Seattle. **ABOVE:** With the name *Dionysus*, Tad Dean's boat started the 1977 campaign with an appearance in Miami for the Champion Spark Plug Regatta. It failed to qualify.

"I said if we had one more thing by the time we got to Spokane, I was going to think real seriously about turning back and bagging the whole thing. But everything went good there."



E.K. Muller

Chip Hanauer on the deck of Tad Dean's hydro.

Then, another time, an old guy came up to me and asked me what the thing was. I told him it was a hydroplane. He says, "Oh, yeah, I saw one of them take off at the airfield one day." He was sure he'd seen one take off!

You have a little, yellow Isetta, which you call your pit car. Don't you have a story about finding one while you were on the road?

I want to say it was in Illinois, but I don't think it was. Somewhere in the middle of the country. We had a tire that was going bald and we wanted to get a tire before we got back on the highway. We went to this place that sold gas and tires. Way in the back, out of the corner of my eye, I see an Isetta. I went over and looked at it, and it was all complete except for the engine. I asked around and they said it belonged to old Joe down the road. So, it was going to be a while waiting for the tire. I headed on down the road to old Joe's place. Joe was there. I said, "You own that Isetta up there?"

"Yep. You want to buy it?"

"No," I said. "Not really. I'd just like to buy some parts off it."

So he says, "What kind of a deal can you make?"

I said, "I'll tell you what. You give us 10 minutes with that car for \$20."

So, we got all of our tools over there, set 'em down alongside the car. He sat there looking at his watch and said, "OK, go to it." I'll bet you it wasn't seven minutes before we had everything off that car you could ever want for an Isetta. Windows, the door, steering wheel, gear shift, all the light parts, wiring harness. We just stripped the car in seven minutes. Helluva deal! We're still running on his tires. If we lose a tire, we just bust out one of old Joe's tires.

Well, you got to Miami and, to put it bluntly, the boat didn't work. What were some of the problems you had?

Dave Culley really helped me. Cul-

ley and I worked one night until 11:00 or 12:00. We could make the carburetor work, but as soon as you started the engine, it quit working. And it's the damndest thing. I still don't know what's wrong. The carburetors are back up in Everett again.

Lucero helped me Sunday morning just before the race. He got on the boat and turned a couple of valves you're never supposed to fiddle with. They're sealed valves and you're not supposed to monkey with them. He says, "You got nothing to lose. You're not in the race. The thing isn't running. So let's go ahead and do it." So, we uncapped this thing and cranked it in, and a couple of times Chip got it started. He could run it on the primer. A couple of times he got it to surge and jump out of the water, then nothing. Needless to say, we didn't make the race.

After the Miami race, you were offered some help from the Miss Madison crew.

The guys said, "C'mon up to Madison. We got lots of parts there. We'll help you out, no problem." So, that's what we did. They gave us their old shop down by the baseball field. They gave us the carburetor they ran on the boat that won the Gold Cup. It ran like a top all year until the sand episode, and that's another story.

What kind of help did the Madison crew give you?



Hydroplane and Raceboat Museum

When the team reached the Tri-Cities for the 1977 APBA Gold Cup, the boat was carrying the name *Tad Dean's Body Shop*.

Dave Stewart, their crew chief, and I went through the timing on the engine to make sure that wasn't a problem. Then we checked the fuel, checked the spark, checked everything on the boat. We put the new carburetor on, and it worked. About that time, we ran into Mike Dunn, who is the brother of one of the guys on the *Madison*. He started working with us. He's just a young kid. He started going over the boat from one end to the other to make sure everything was working. They ended up helping us quite a bit.

When you got to D.C., you hooked up with Tom Kaufman. Tell us a little about that.

We got to D.C. on Friday. I didn't know they ran one heat on Saturday. Nobody had told me that. I'd talked to Jon Peddie when we left Madison. Jon agreed to qualify the boat for me on Saturday. That was cool. Jon says, "Yeah, I'll take the boat out and run it for you."

Then they came up with this Saturday heat. Here I was, I had no driver. I was going to fly Chip back, but I wanted to make sure it worked first. Then it got to a point where I didn't have time for him to fly back. So, Buddy Byers said, "Well, we've got lots of drivers." Steve Jones was going to be there, and Freddie Alter was going to be there, and all these people. It turned out none of 'em showed up except Kaufman. So, he didn't want to do it.

It got up to five minutes before race time and he still didn't want to do it. I didn't know the *Madison* guys well enough that they would loan me Jon Peddie to race one heat. They were reluctant, saying if it got back to



Andy Muntz

For the Seafair Trophy Race in Seattle, the boat carried the name *Huling's People Mover*.

their town that he helped us get in the race and then they ended up not running in their heat...

He would have been a traitor.

Exactly. So, they wouldn't go for it. They would now because they know me better. At the time they didn't, and I respected that.

You dubbed the boat *Mister Fabricator*.

Kaufman said, "Well, if I'm going to race it for you, I want the points to go down for *Mister Fabricator*."

Did he sponsor you in any way?

No. As a matter of fact, Tom ended up costing me quite a bit of money.

He blew an engine...

Yeah, and I paid him. See, they owed me \$1,500 tow money and \$1,200 prize money. It ended up that I got \$1,000 tow money and \$500 of the prize money. I paid him on the additional \$1,200 they owed me, and I paid his plane tickets there and back. It ended up about \$500, which is just what I didn't need.

You started out with two engines. Kaufman blew one so you had one left for the whole Eastern swing.

That's all we raced all year! It's still in good shape.

If you'd blown the second engine you'd have been in tough shape.

Well, not really, because we were in Madison. Doug McIntosh brought back an extra crankshaft with him for me, and we had parts to put the first engine back together. I

could have had it back in shape had we needed it, but I didn't feel we needed it.

Do you feel you can build an engine on your own without help?

Yeah, I could do it. But as long as I've got Al Thoreson, I'm a fool not to use him. I'm better off with him.

After the President's Cup you went back to Madison. You more or less based out of Madison?

Yeah. We stayed at the Broadway Hotel, which was cheap.

What things do you do in Madison between races?

Oh, man, Madison is the most dismal thing in the whole world.

A lot of people really like the town during race week.

Race week is fine. But the Regatta is the only thing that comes to Madison. The day the

swimming pool opens is big, and then the boat race. Take the boat race away and it's nothing. It's terribly polluted from the power mill. The river is bad, you can't swim in it. And they have cornered the market on homely women.

I flew my dad back there because he'd always wanted to go. I worked at Jon Peddie's to make money. He has a body shop there. It's exactly the same business. His shop's a lot like mine. I just hired on with him like you would anywhere else. Then Leo Macutza said they wanted their truck painted for the *Esquire*. I said, "Well, I don't really have the time to do it, and it's awfully hot, but I need the money." So, we ended up painting their truck. And then I did some work to the *Natural Light* truck. It helped make expenses.

In Detroit, you got Bruno's Appliance for a sponsor.

Yeah, he came to me through Jerry Kalen. He's a friend of Jerry's. He was a good sponsor. He was very enthusiastic about the whole thing. We ran not so good. We lost a spark plug and quit running in one heat. The spark plug just fell out of the hole. I don't know why. That's another thing we learned—to tighten those things down good and tight, and recheck 'em all the time. Tom Martin was driving, doing the best I've ever seen him drive. In the second heat he tore a hole in the boat. I guess he hit something, so he got black-flagged. That was the end of that day.

After the Detroit race there was a newspaper article by Joe Falls concerning your boat that raised quite a stink. How did you react to that?

Oh, it was just another typical article by some guy. He mislead everybody. I was in the middle of work when he came up and asked me some questions. He came up like a real sincere reporter, and was going to write a good, legitimate story about what it was like for us to travel around the country and do this racing without any money. And so I told it like it was. He turned around and wrote a real disgusting article about it. Obviously, he must not be a race fan.

There was a report that Bruno was going to sponsor you for all four Midwest races but changed his mind after the article by Falls.

Well, he was thinking about it. He was not happy about the article. I didn't write Joe Falls a letter. Tom Martin said he was taking care of that. Muncy called him and told him he was a so-and-so.

At Madison and Owensboro, Bob Maschmedt drove for you. Why wasn't Chip Hanauer driving?

Because I didn't have the money to bring Chip back there. Maschmedt came to me and asked if he could drive the boat for a couple of races, so he could get his obligation with APBA for driving at the Gold Cup out of the way. He was going to pay his expenses and stay back there. So, I called Chip and told him what the deal was, and he said he had stuff to do anyway, so it was fine with him.



Hydroplane and Raceboat Museum

Chip Hanauer is interviewed by the press at the Seattle race. He drove the boat to a 7th place finish.

What about Madison?

Madison was an easy thing. We knew the boat would run. Everything was in good shape. I'm not much of a boat builder, so it took me about three days to fix the hole in the boat. It was in the crown of the bow, where it wraps around. I was trying to bend the wood to fit. I figured out that wasn't going to work. Finally, I went and bought a piece of oak, which is what I needed for the nucleus of the repair, and had it sawed with the right bend in it. Solved the problem. Bob Hughes, he's the president of the *Madison* boat operation, gave me the metal to fix it.

Owensboro?

Maschmedt went up to Owensboro to do some business there. He has some companies he represents there. This was our best day yet. We had the engine in the truck. We got there, threw the engine in. Maschmedt was putting on his clothes while we were setting the engine in the boat. Already had fuel in it. He went out and qualified the boat right now. Put it back on the trailer and went about enjoying ourselves in Owensboro. The *Madison* guys had been there two days already. That became part of the fun at every race—getting there after the *Madison* guys and qualifying before they did. Just drove 'em nuts when we'd do that. It was great!

The only trouble with Owensboro was it was so hot you couldn't move. We were staying at the Holiday Inn and the air conditioner broke. It was a fiasco, it really was. Every time they'd have a draw at one of these races, they'd borrow my hat. We'd get out my hat and put all the names in it. Three races in

a row they drew my number first, and I drew *Bud*, *Atlas*, and somebody else fast. Never failed. So that's where we threw the hat away.

We ran exceptionally good there. Not fast. We didn't try to run fast anywhere. We were just out to finish.

At both Madison and Owensboro you made the final heat.

I couldn't believe it. Every race we were in back there, everybody would finish. Five boats start and five boats finish. You know, I'm thinking, gee, we're in the final heat. I'm looking at third or fourth place, we're going to win some money. But no such luck.

At Dayton, Chip came back with you.

That worked out good. I had some extra money, so I flew Chip back. We did a little cleaning up on the boat, some paint work at Peddie's place. At Dayton we ran as *River's Inlet Resort* for Maschmedt. He and I made a deal.

Friday we got there and ran and Chip could not turn the boat. He'd end up in the weeds, he went about 75 miles an hour. It was terrible. Chip was really let down. He thought Dayton was going to be his race because he's won the Nationals there and he knows the course. He thought if we ever had a chance with our little boat, it would be in Dayton.

We went out and really tied one on Friday night. It was classic. I took John-

Boy to the big city. We came struggling in about 7:30 in the morning. I stayed up. Chip had lost his contacts in the swimming pool the night before, so we had to look for those in the morning. It took until 8:30, flushing out the pool, going through the filter. We vacuumed the whole pool. Couldn't find 'em. So he had to drive with his glasses on with this horrendous hangover. He went out there and turned this thing like you wouldn't believe. Until [Jerry] Bangs went out and requalified, we were third fastest qualifier. I think we went 95 or something like that. But Dayton came off well.

Did you go back to Madison before heading west?

We went back to Madison and treated everybody there. Had a little party and gave 'em \$150 towards their new boat. I also paid for the parts they wanted to sell me. When we got back to town here [Seattle], I called up Al. He went and checked out the engine, said she was as good as new.

How did things go for you at the Gold Cup in Tri-Cities?

We qualified real easy there, if I remember right—105 or something like that. I had told everybody all season long that 3,000 rpm was the magic number. We'd never turn the engine over that, because unless you're racing and got a good race, 3,000 is fine. Chip just kept her

right in there and qualified good.

In the race, Chip beat everyone to the first corner in all three of his heats.

Chip did a beautiful job of beating 'em to the corner. I got mad because Muncey watered him down and broke the windshield on the boat. It was either the first or second heat. I should know but I don't. Chip got one of his super starts. Mickey Remund was on the inside, and Muncey was on the outside. Mickey moved over a little bit, so Chip corrected just a little bit and moved over, and about that time Muncey came swoopin' around the outside and water hit the windshield with enough force it broke the windshield right off the boat. I was mad. I was real mad.

How about Seattle?

I was real upset before the race because of that rule change. [A mandatory qualification speed was imposed for the first time that season. A boat had to complete at least one lap at over 90 mph.] I like Wurster, he's OK, but he did bring his boats out with the understanding that the rules were written the way they were. That is, his boats were going to have to perform, but they weren't going to have to go 100 miles an hour. He hasn't got anything that'll go 100 miles an hour, except his new boat, which will just barely make it. He got shortchanged and so did Doug McIntosh. You know, Doug dragged his boat back east to those races and put on a good show. He ran good back there, nothin' spectacular, but good.

Heerensperger, I think, was the promoter of that [rule change]. Muncey didn't especially care. There were a few people who instigated that. It just made me mad. It was very unsportsmanlike on the owners' part, not on the drivers' part.

How did the Huling sponsorship come about?

That came about, strangely enough, through their parts manager coming to ask me why I don't buy parts for the body shop through Huling Brothers Buick and Opel. I said, "Well, I would buy more parts. I've been gone all summer. I'll give

Hydroplane and Raceboat Museum



The boat failed to start in San Diego in their final appearance for the 1977 season.

you a try.” Then we got to talking about the boat. He says, “You know, I’m going to throw that up to my boss, see what he says.” So, he calls me the next day and says they’re hot to do it.

They offered me considerably less than I wanted. This was before the Gold Cup. I told them I didn’t want to go with anybody for less than \$5,000 for the two races. They hemmed and hawed, said, “We’ll talk to you later.” Right after the Gold Cup they were down at the shop, said, “How much do you want?” I told ‘em and they paid it. That was it, for one race. Steve Huling told me he was real pleased with the whole thing. He got fair-

ly good coverage.

You didn’t make the final heat either in Tri-Cities or Seattle.

No. We were alternate, waiting just like a vulture both times, but no chance.

In San Diego, you had Pacific Datsun as a sponsor.

That was through Rich Eastwood, another crew guy we met in Florida. He lives in LA and flies to the races. He works for Air West and flies cheap. He landed the sponsor down there. Doug Reed, the guy who owns the place, is a young bachelor-type, and he really enjoyed the whole thing. We ran not so good on Friday. The boat kept getting slower. We

knew something was wrong. Tom Martin said the fuel pressure was low. I got to checking. I pulled the screens, and that’s when we found the sand.

Vandalism?

Oh, yeah, it was definitely vandalism. I pulled out a half a coffee can full of sand in the tank. And I know that’s just the half we caught in the filters. Everything smaller went through. They’re just screens, like screen-door screens.

Do you think this happened in the pits?

No. It could’ve happened on display for Huling Brothers out in West Seattle, or here in Ballard where I’ve been keeping the boat. One place or the other. I know it didn’t happen down there. The pits were very well secured, best I’ve seen anyplace.

So, I flushed the carburetor out as best I could. We went out and ran Saturday. Tom said it ran like a top. We’d done some work to the engine, and he said for the first time he saw 4,000 on the tachometer. That’s saying a lot for a stock engine. We were ready. Sunday morning, we went out to run the boat and nothing. It would not run.

When you went east for the early races, which teams impressed you? Which ones were ready, and what sets them apart?

Muncey and *Budweiser*. Those guys. They have a full-time crew that gets paid. That’s the difference. These guys get paid to work. The *Madison* guys are prepared, but not to the extent that *Budweiser* and *Atlas* are. The U-7 is prepared, but their equipment is funny. It’s all very fragile.

The *Gemini* is in about the same boat we’re in. They’ve got a nice boat, funky old trailer, and one engine. They’re not in very good shape. They blew their gearbox and they were just out. That’s all they could do. *Natural Light* is another *Budweiser* operation. You’ve got Bob Esp-land running it. He’s very meticulous, so they’ll always run.

The *Esquire* had the same trouble crew wise that we did. They had Leo

Hydroplane and Raceboat Museum



Hydroplane and Raceboat Museum



TOP: Tad Dean continued racing his boat for two more years, but never again completed the full circuit. In 1978, it saw action in Seattle and San Diego as *Dr. Toyota*. **ABOVE:** The boat entered four races in 1969, including an appearance in Seattle while sponsored by the Ingraham High School Class of 1969.

Macutza who yells at everybody, and everyone else was out for a good time, it seems. They had a lot of mistakes. They put the boat out in the water once and it ran right out of fuel half-way through the race. Nobody remembered to fuel it.

For a low-budget operation, you seem to have one of the best. The boat runs, doesn't usually let anyone down.

I'd say that's mainly because Al put everything together right the first time. I have learned what to look for, what things make it not run. The little things. We were fortunate nothing broke.

Sometimes you're a little outspoken about the sport and the way it's run. Do you feel accepted by the majority?

Oh, yeah, I get along fine. I keep looking at this sport, and about 10 years ago they blew it, completely. They have the finest sport there is, spectator-wise. It's a whole lot more exciting to watch six boats come down for the start than it is to watch 33 cars at Indy. The noise is there, they've got a big view, big roost-ertails, big everything. The people who were involved in the sport 10 years ago were in it to spend money and write it off for advertising. They lost all perspective when the people had money. They never worked to raise the prize money. They never worked to make it feasible for you to drag your boat all the way across the country. They just didn't handle it right.

Take Grand National stock cars. They're in the same type of business. They advertise car parts. Grand Nationals will race on a weekend for \$100,000 prize money, no problem. Yet we take up the same pages in *Sports Illustrated*. They make money and we don't. Now everybody's crying about it, wondering what are they going to do?

They need to hire a promotions company to take our boat race and walk into the offices of, for example, Coca-Cola, and say, "Here it is. This is what we got. We get this many people sitting on the beach watching it, and this is how many people read this newspaper and that newspaper, and this is what our



Buffalo Brothers

Ted Dean at a recent hydro race at the Tri-Cities.

print is. Do you want to sponsor it? Do you want it to be called the Coca-Cola regatta in Madison or Seattle, or wherever?" Winston does it with stock cars all the time. They throw a lot of money into it. That pays the bills.

I'm going down to the national meeting and voice my opinion, which doesn't really weigh a whole lot. It might weigh a little more than it has in the past. See if they'll listen.

What are your plans for next year?

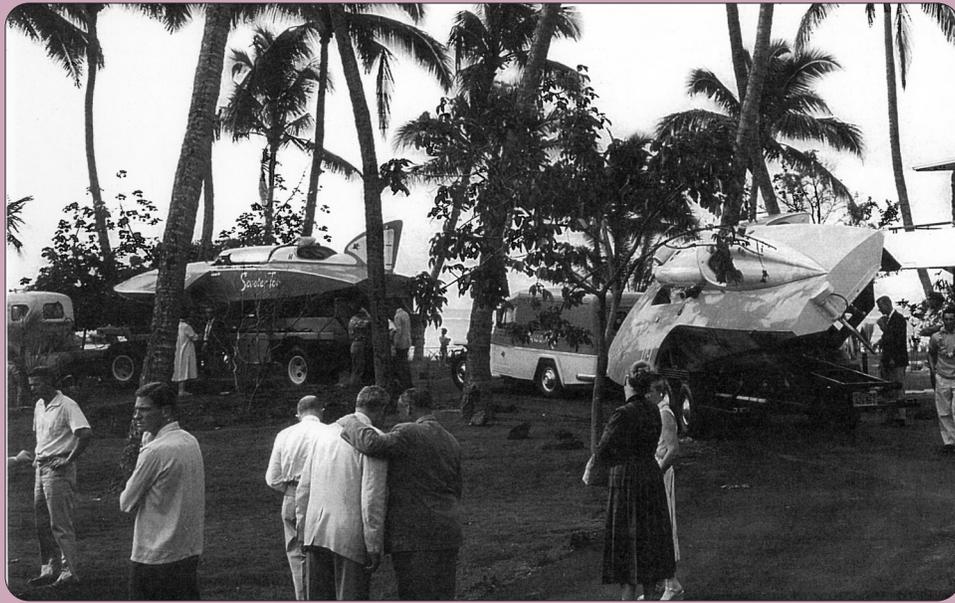
We've got Rich working on sponsors. We figure if we can work it so he can walk into any company across the country with my sponsor presentation instead of mailing them a package ... Rich is a good salesman. He can fly around the country. We pick out four companies in St. Paul, or Detroit, or wherever the home office is. He can take two days and hit all four companies. We take a film, a book. He's representing me. Who has done that in the last 10 years, walk right in without a big bankroll?

As soon as I know that I'll have some

money coming in, then I'll step up to the counter. I'm going to talk to Freddie Alter to see what a kit boat is going to cost me. We'd put it together here. I'd close up the shop for a couple of months and build it in there.

All in all, was last summer worth it for you? Did you enjoy it?

It was well worth it. I paid all my shop bills while I was gone. We came out ahead. That's not paying me back for all I put into it over the year, the time and money. I'm fortunate, the only thing I owe any money on is the truck I bought. That's a rare position in boat racing—to own everything. But, we proved to ourselves that we can do it. Financially speaking, I wouldn't want to do it again as pitifully as we did it this year, but I would be willing to do it again. ❖



A TROPICAL TRY FOR THE MILE



TOP: The two Kaiser boats rest under the palm trees in Honolulu before the exhibition event.
ABOVE: Some of the dignitaries and race officials pose in front of the *Hawaii Kai*.

All photos by Richard Carter

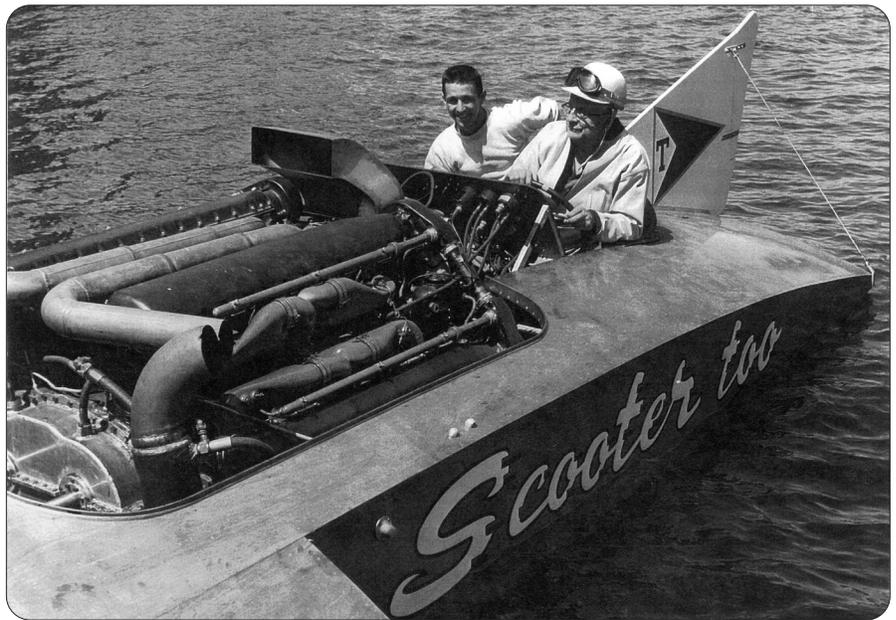
FROM THE UNJ VAULT:

The following story appeared in the November 1979 issue of the *Unlimited NewsJournal*. Its author, Walt Johnson, was the lead guitarist for the rock band Barney Armstrong's Machine, who sponsored several hydroplanes in the mid- to late-1970s. During a visit to Hawaii, Johnson found time to conduct research about Henry Kaiser's attempt in March 1956 to set a world's straight-away speed record in Hawaii with two of his boats. The following is the result.

BY WALT JOHNSON

Oahu's Keehi Lagoon, although today surrounded by massive industrial build-up, in 1956 presented a beautiful tropical setting for an unlimited hydroplane mile trial. Henry J. Kaiser, owner of two unlimiteds—U-10 *Scooter Too*, driven by Jack Regas, and U-9 *Hawaii Kai*, driven by Ken St. Oegger—decided upon Hawaii, location of a large Kaiser estate (the “Pink Palace”), as the perfect place to attempt to break the world mile straightaway record of 178.497 mph. The existing record was set on July 7, 1952, by Stan Sayres in *Slo-mo-shun IV* at Seattle.

Henry Kaiser felt the mile attempt would also be an excellent opportunity



TOP: Jack Regas (left) and Henry Kaiser in the cockpit of *Scooter Too* the year before. Note the boat's unusual 24-cylinder Allison V-3420 engine.
ABOVE: Regas prepares to take *Scooter Too* onto Keehi Lagoon as a crowd looks on.



to expose his fellow islanders to the excitement of unlimited hydroplane racing—a sport creating feverish excitement on parts of the mainland. *Scooter Too* had raced and sunk in Seattle during the 1955 Gold Cup, a propensity for which it became nicknamed “the submarine.”

The *Hawaii Kai*, completed in July 1955, saw action late in the summer at Lake Tahoe. To this end, Kaiser and the Hawaiian Powerboat Association scheduled a two-boat exhibition race for 10:30 a.m., on Sunday, March 4, 1956. It was to be a best-two-heats-out-of-three contest on a triangular course with the start-finish line situated just off Honolulu International Airport.

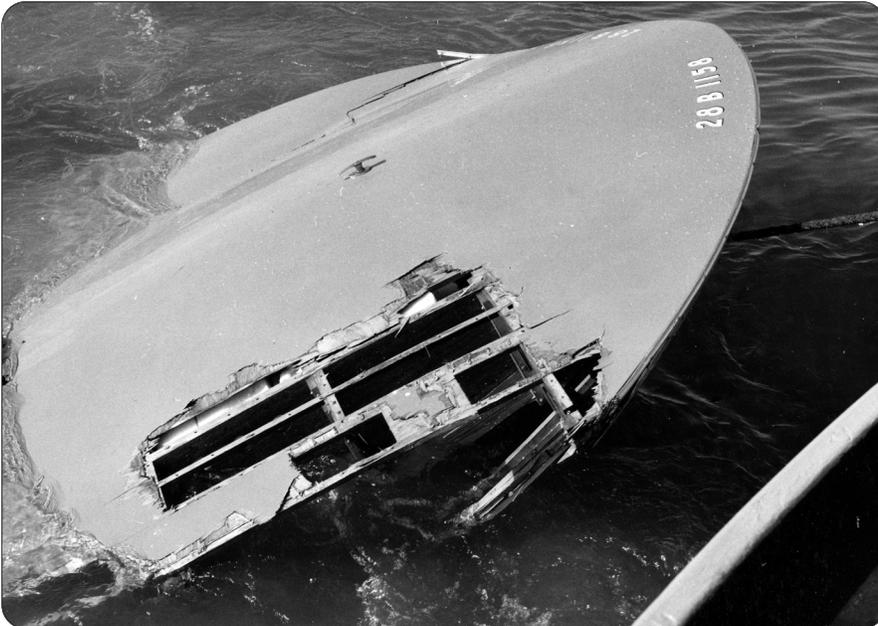
The airport side of the course was also a measured mile trap, surveyed and sanctioned by the APBA for speed trial attempts from February 28 to March 3. Kaiser planned to have the record secured prior to the exhibition race.

Rough water prohibited any attempt at the record during the sanctioned time, and on Saturday the 3rd, chief referee Kent Hitchcock granted an extension through the following day. On race day morning, Honoluluans awoke to a beautiful, calm day.

In the airport pits early in the morning, Kaiser, St. Oegger, and Regas huddled and decided to make an assault on the record with the U-9. At 8:15 a.m., the *Hawaii Kai* was lowered into the



TOP: Jack Regas and *Scooter Too* making a run on Keehi Lagoon. **MIDDLE:** Ken St. Oegger (left) and Henry Kaiser look on as the *Hawaii Kai* is launched. **ABOVE:** *Hawaii Kai* making its run on Keehi Lagoon with Diamond Head in the background.



blue-green tropical lagoon. St. Oegger made several slow speed runs around the lagoon, the famous Aloha Tower and Diamond Head providing a beautiful backdrop. He then took the *Kai* along the Sand Island side of the course and prepared to make the sharp left turn and head into the traps just offshore from the airport.

With not much room to make a good run at the entrance to the mile, the *Hawaii Kai* accelerated very quickly as 1,000 early-morning spectators held their breath. At 1,140 feet into the trap, the rudder shaft split apart, dropping the rudder, spinning the boat, and digging it into the water where internal and external pressure tore it apart.

Morlan Vissel of Honolulu, a former driver, radioed to Hitchcock, "There's metal in the air 50 feet above the boat!" St. Oegger, in a doubled-up position, skimmed 100 feet across the water, landing on his back, sustaining only a broken leg and a black eye. The timing equipment showed the *Kai* to be traveling at 193 mph when it flipped, with "the record in the bag," according to Hitchcock.

Any attempt by the *Scooter Too* to break the record was canceled, but Regas took the U-10 out anyway to provide a two-lap show for the crowd, which had swelled to 10,000 with news of the accident.

Parts and boats were packed up for the long boat trip back to the mainland, where a new Les Staudacher craft, *Hawaii Kai III*, was quickly constructed. On November 19, 1957, on Seattle's Lake Washington, Jack Regas annexed the mile record while driving that *Hawaii Kai* to a speed of 187.627 mph. ❖

TOP: The crash of *Hawaii Kai*. Note the image of St. Oegger tumbling across the water to the right of the spray caused by the accident. **MIDDLE:** The damage to the hull of *Hawaii Kai*. The boat was considered a total loss and never appeared again. **ABOVE:** Ken St. Oegger gets a hospital visit from Henry Kaiser and a local Hawaiian boat race official.

Get your FREE edition of the 2023 Record Book.

Suppose you're having a debate with one of your hydroplane buddies about which boat has entered the most heats during its career. Let's say somebody on Facebook asks whether a hydroplane race has ever been held in Oklahoma, or Iowa. What if you wake up one morning wondering which driver has the best percentage of heat victories for the number of heats he has entered? Do you know who won the Harmsworth Trophy in 1912? Which races did Vic Kliesrath win?

These questions and a multitude of others can be answered with the records and statistics contained in the 2023 Hydro Record Book. And, the best thing is, this vast storehouse of information about the sport is totally free. It's there for the taking on the Unlimited NewsJournal website.

The fourth annual edition of the Hydro Record Book is now available. It serves as a free reference for serious hydro fans who enjoy keeping track of the records and statistics related to this sport. It also might come in handy for settling disputes.

This year's edition includes a handful of corrections from last year's version, some embellishments, a few tweaks, and a couple of new categories. We hope those changes will make the publication even more useful for hydro fans.

The idea of the Hydro Record Book stemmed from the old media guides that the late Fred Farley used to produce some 40 years ago for the Unlimited Racing Commission. We noticed that there was something missing from those publications, however. Other than the results of all the Gold Cups and Harmsworth Trophy races, they didn't have much about the racing that occurred before

World War II.

This version has attempted to correct that. It compiles the results of every "official" race held since 1922, which is when the Gold Cup class was established. It means that all of the driver and owner records and statistics include those who participated in the sport during the 1920s, 1930s, and early 1940s. (Because it is very difficult to track hulls in the old days, the boat statistics are pretty-much post-war.)

By the way, what is an "official" race? We explain in the Record Book that to be counted in the records, a race must have at least three entries that are in the Gold Cup or Unlimited class (or equivalent) and the event must have at least two heats of racing.

So, what have you got to lose? It's FREE!! And, who knows? You might find it to be the most useful hydro book in your collection. ❖

2023 HYDRO RECORD BOOK AND STATISTICS



PUBLISHED BY THE
UNLIMITED NEWSJOURNAL

If you ever have a question about hydroplane records or are just curious about the sport's history, the Hydro Record Book is your answer. It's available free on the Unlimited NewsJournal website. You can read it there, bookmark it, download it to your computer, or print your own copy. You'll find it by going to www.unlimitednewsjournal.net and clicking on the link at the top of the page.

Here are a few samples of what you'll find inside:

MOST RACE VICTORIES AMONG DRIVERS:

1. Dave Villwock67	8. Steve David 18	15. George Henley 12
2. Bill Muncey62	9. Billy Schumacher 17	Mark Tate.....12
3. Chip Hanauer61	10. Danny Foster 16	Gar Wood12
4. Dean Chenoweth.....25	Ron Musson 16	18. Mickey Remund11
Jimmy Shane25	Tom D'Eath 16	19. Mark Evans.....10
6. Jim Kropfeld.....22	13. Chuck Thompson..... 15	Mira Slovak.....10
Bill Cantrell.....22	14. J. Michael Kelly 14	

MOST VICTORIES WITH THE SAME TEAM OWNER:

1. Dave Villwock for Bernie Little30	11. Ron Musson for Ole Bardahl 13
2. Bill Muncey for himself29	12. Gar Wood for himself12
3. Chip Hanauer for Fran Muncey).....24	George Henley for Dave Heerensperger 12
4. Dean Chenoweth for Bernie Little23	Tom D'Eath for Bernie Little.....12
5. Jim Kropfeld for Bernie Little22	Mark Tate for Steve Woomer12
Chip Hanauer for Bernie Little.....22	16. Bill Muncey for Joe Schoenith11
7. Dave Villwock for Erick Ellstrom21	17. Billy Schumacher for Ole Bardahl10
8. Jimmy Shane for Miss Madison, Inc19	18. Bill Stead for William Waggoner.....9
9. Bill Muncey for Willard Rhodes.....18	Chip Hanauer for William Bennett.....9
10. Steve David for Miss Madison, Inc15	George Reis for himself.....9

MOST HEAT VICTORIES BY A DRIVER:

1. Dave Villwock342	8. Jim Kropfeld.....92	15. Bill Cantrell.....66
2. Chip Hanauer270	9. Mark Evans84	16. Mickey Remund63
3. Bill Muncey234	10. Tom D'Eath81	17. Ron Musson61
4. Steve David151	11. J. Michael Kelly80	18. Andrew Tate.....51
5. Jimmy Shane142	12. Chuck Thompson.....79	19. Scott Pierce.....48
6. Mark Tate.....128	13. Billy Schumacher77	20. Nate Brown.....47
7. Dean Chenoweth.....113	14. Mike Hanson69	

MOST GOLD CUP VICTORIES BY AN OWNER:

1. Bernie Little14	9. Bill Muncey3	Horace Dodge2
2. Fran Muncey.....7	George Reis.....3	Jesse Vincent.....2
3. Miss Madison, Inc.....6	Jonathan Wainwright.....3	Joe Schoenith.....2
4. Erick Ellstrom.....5	12. Caleb Bragg.....2	Mike and Lori Jones2
Gar Wood5	Dave Heerensperger2	Steve Woomer.....2
Ole Bardahl5	Edward Schroeder2	Vic Kliesrath.....2
Stan Sayres.....5	Fred Leland.....2	Zalmon Simmons2
8. Willard Rhodes.....4	George Townsend.....2	

TEAMS WITH WITH BEST % OF HEAT WINS vs. HEATS FINISHED:

Among boats that have had at least 20 race appearances. (*) The name listed is the name the boat used when it first competed for the race team and the name of the team owner.

OWNER/BOAT	WINS	FINISHED	PCT
1. Bernie Little/Miss Budweiser (Hull #8012)	87	110	0.791
2. Fran Muncey/Atlas Van Lines (Hull #8401)	55	72	0.764
3. Bernie and Joe Little/Miss Budweiser (Hull #9712 T-5)	87	117	0.744
4. Bernie Little/Miss Budweiser (Hull #9501 T-3)	94	130	0.723
5. Bernie Little/Miss Budweiser (Hull #8901 T-3)	70	97	0.722
6. Bill Muncey/Atlas Van Lines (Hull #7701)	79	113	0.699
7. Dave Heerensperger/Pay 'n Pak (Hull #7325)	58	85	0.682
8. Bernie Little/Miss Budweiser (Hull #8701 T-2)	98	146	0.671
9. Ole Bardahl/Miss Bardahl (Hull #6740)	44	75	0.660
10. Erick Ellstrom/Miss E-Lam Plus (Hull #0116)	141	225	0.627

BOATS WITH THE MOST CAREER RACE APPEARANCES:

The boat name listed is the name the hull had when it first entered competition.

1. #8700 Miller American	151	10. #9712(T-5) Miss Budweiser	87
2. #8806 Miss Madison	149	11. #0706 Oh Boy! Oberto	79
3. #7325 Pay 'n Pak	129	12. #8410 Miss Tosti Asti	77
4. #8200 Atlas Van Lines	115	13. #8803 Risle's Express	73
5. #8808 Mr. Pringles	103	14. #9401(T-4) Miss Budweiser	69
6. #8401 Atlas Van Lines	100	15. #7902 The Squire Shop	68
7. #0001(T-6) Miss Budweiser	96	16. #6079 Nitrogen Too	63
8. #92102 Coor's Dry	92	17. #0116 Miss E-Lam Plus	62
9. #9302 Miss T-Plus	90	#9899 U-99	62

BOATS WITH THE MOST RACE VICTORIES FOR A SINGLE OWNER:

The boat name listed is the name the hull had when it won its first race for that owner.

1. #0116 (Miss E-Lam Plus) for Erick Ellstrom	27	#0001 (Formulaboats.com) for Ted Porter	16
2. #0706 (Oberto) for Miss Madison, Inc.	25	11. #8401 (Atlas Van Lines) for Fran Muncey	15
3. #7701 (Atlas Van Lines) for Bill Muncey	24	12. #5960 (Miss Thriftway) for Willard Rhodes	14
4. #8701 T-2 (Miss Budweiser) for Bernie Little	23	13. #6240 (Miss Bardahl) for Ole Bardahl	12
5. #8012 (Miss Budweiser) for Bernie Little	22	#8700 (Winston Eagle) for Steve Woomer	12
6. #9501 T-3 (Miss Budweiser) for Bernie Little	18	15. #6812 (Miss Budweiser) for Bernie Little	11
#9712 T-5 (Miss Budweiser) for Bernie Little	18	#92102 (Tubby's Grilled Submarines) Lori and Mike Jones	11
8. #8901 T-3 (Miss Budweiser) for Bernie Little	16	17. #7025 (Miss Budweiser) for Bernie Little	10
#7325 (Pay 'n Pak) for Dave Heerensperger	16	#6740 (Miss Bardahl) for Ole Bardahl	10

BOAT NAMES THAT HAVE WON THE MOST GOLD CUPS:

1. Miss Budweiser	14	El Lagarto	3	Miss Thriftway	2
2. Atlas Van Lines	7	Hotsy Totsy	3	Miss Century 21	2
3. Miss Bardahl	5	Miller American	3	My Sin	2
Slo-mo-shun	5	Miss HomeStreet	3	Packard ChrisCraft	2
5. Miss Detroit	4	13. Oberto	2	Greenwich Folly	2
Spirit of Qatar	4	Pay 'n Pak	2	Baby Bootlegger	2
7. Chip	3	Ellstrom E-Lam Plus	2		
Dixie	3	Miss America	2		

BOOK REVIEW:

Fifty 5 Years: A Personal History of Unlimited Hydroplane Racing

BY CRAIG FJARLIE

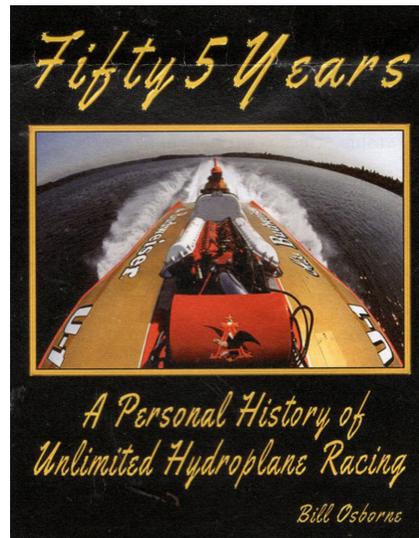
There is no doubt that Bill Osborne is one of the finest photographers of unlimited hydroplanes in the modern era. His work has been featured on magazine covers, used in promotional material for a number of teams, and is sought-after by collectors. He has been able to obtain access to unusual vantage points, taken risks with life and limb, and captured action other photographers missed.

Osborne published a book of his best photographs and memories of unlimited racing when he had been involved for 50 years. The book was updated following the 2021 season, when he reached 55 years as a photographer. The 357-page soft-bound book contains stunning images of boats and profiles of people he has known.

The first six pages are a synopsis of Osborne's personal journey documenting unlimited racing with his photographs, beginning with the time he was a child and Bill Muncey lifted him into the cockpit of the first *Miss Thriftway*. It was a life-changing moment, and Osborne credits Muncey with initiating what became his ongoing love of the sport.

Osborne's photographs have opened doors for him that few other people have been fortunate enough to enter. It's fair to say that Osborne had better access to some of the sport's personalities than many of its participants.

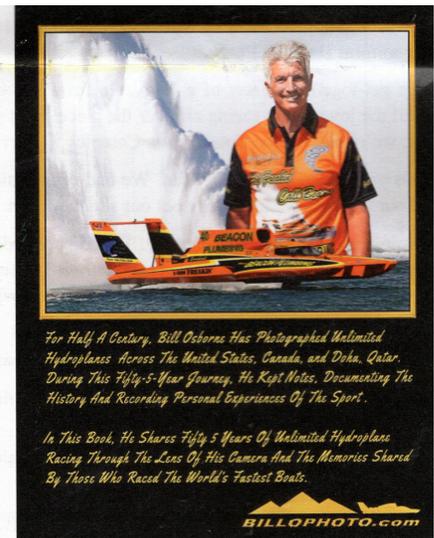
While photographs are the obvious feature of Osborne's book, his memories of a number of individuals add a unique depth to the text. He recalls relationships and conversations with Muncey, Bernie Little, Jim Lucero, Ron Jones,



Dean Chenoweth, Jim Kropfeld, Chip Hanauer, Steve David, Bob Hughes, Dave Villwock, Jimmy Shane, J. Michael Kelly, Mark and Andrew Tate, and Bill Cahill. Some of the details have never before been shared with the public.

Shorter pieces include his interactions with Bill Bennett, Tracy Bratvold, Ron Brown, Sam Cole, Ed Cooper, Jr., George Henley, Fred Leland, Fran Muncey, Art Oberto, Lee Schoenith, Billy Schumacher, and Bill Wurster, among others. Osborne also gives generous credit to photographers Bob Carver and Rich Ormbrek for helping him hone his photographic skills and techniques when he began seriously taking professional photos. It is obvious that their ideas provided invaluable information that Osborne still incorporates in his work today.

Near the end of the book, Osborne features his 12 favorite photos or sequence of photos, followed by explanations about them. He also acknowledges the contribution of the Hydroplane and



Raceboat Museum in preserving the history of unlimited hydroplane racing.

If there is one detail in the book that could have been improved, it is the need for a proofreader. There are a number of incidents in which words are misspelled or repeated in a sentence, in addition to simple grammatical errors. Those things can cause someone to read a sentence two or three times to understand what Osborne is trying to say.

Overall, Osborne's book is a valuable document that offers extensive and exclusive historical information about unlimited hydroplane racing, both in the outstanding photographs and the written memories. Any serious historian of unlimited hydroplane racing should have *Fifty 5 Years*. ❖

Fifty 5 Years is available from Bill Osborne at 106 River View Drive, Lyle, WA 98635. Send check or money order for \$78, payable to Bill Osborne, to cover book plus shipping.

HYDROFILE

Race Team News by Lon Erickson



U-1 Miss HomeStreet/Madison Racing

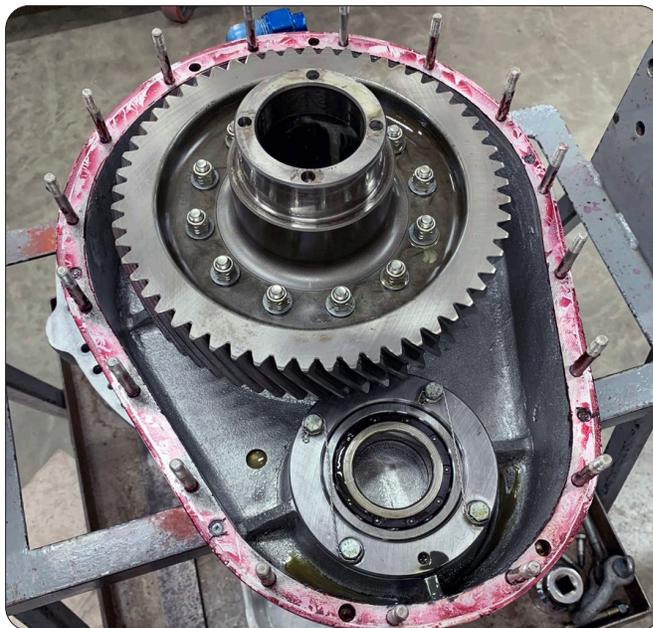
New U-1 driver, Dylan Runne, was recently in the Northwest and stopped by the HomeStreet racing shop in Tukwila to “try on” his new ride for 2023. He also got the opportunity to trailer fire the H.A.R.M. vintage 1958 U-40 *Miss Bardahl*.



Miss Madison Racing photos

Go3 Racing

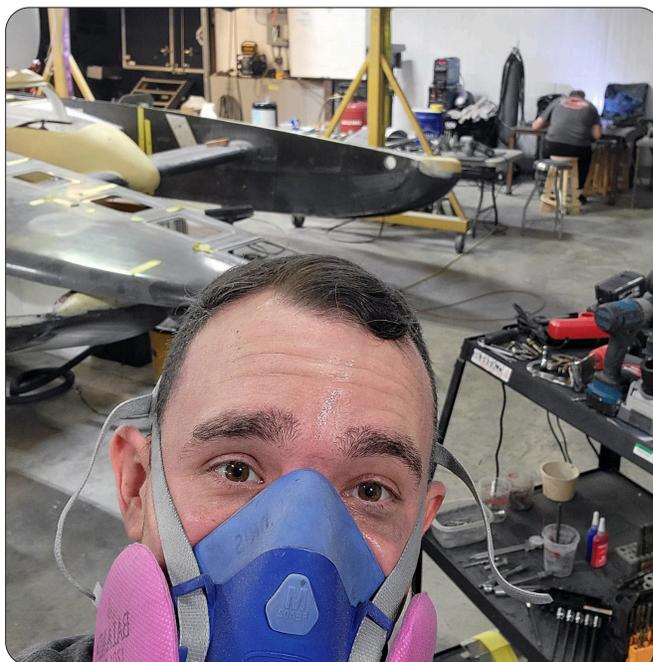
Engine and gearbox work continues in the Go3 Turbinator shop.



Go3 Racing

U-27 Wiggins Racing

Rebuilding continues on the U-27. Below is crewman Chris Martin with Dave Villwock working on the boat in the background.



Wiggins Racing

U-8/U-9 Strong Racing

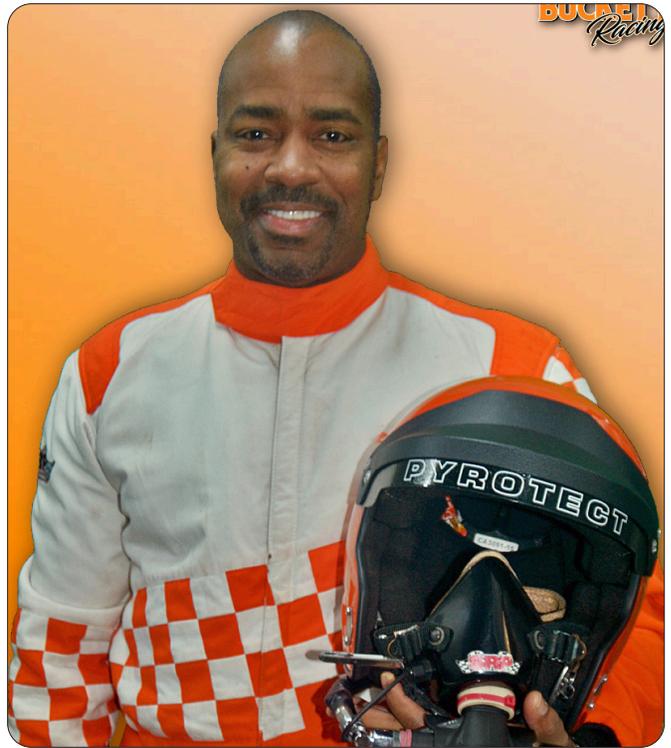
The rebuild of the U-9 continues. New sponson tips are complete and the boat is ready for bottom paint.



Strong Racing

U-40 Bucket List Racing

Bucket List Racing has announced that inboard driver Brent Hall will drive the U-440 hull at the Tri-Cities spring testing, the HAPO Columbia Cup, and the HomeStreet Bank Cup at Seafair. Brent has raced in six different classes of inboards over the last 16 years. The team is working on building up its inventory of new and spare parts, plus is making some changes learned from last year's competition.



Bucket List Racing



Michael Lemier



Dustin Echols

COMMENTS FROM H1

Jan Shaw, Director of Operations



Spring is almost here, which means hydro racing season will be soon upon us. The season ahead is looking promising, thanks to the planning efforts of many H1 staff people during the past several months and because of the excellent progress that is taking place in boat shops across the country.

One can't overestimate the impact that the Covid pandemic had on this sport. Losing an entire season was crippling to H1 Unlimited, and especially to the non-profit community organizations that host our races. But, although there are still many challenges ahead, I think things have finally turned around.

For those of you planning your vacation, it's currently looking like we will once again have five races on the 2023 schedule. The dates are still tentative because most of the contracts have yet to be signed, but there's an excellent chance we will be in Guntersville, Alabama, the weekend of June 23 to 25; in Madison, Indiana, the weekend of June 30 to July 2;

in the Tri-Cities, Washington, the weekend of July 28 to 30; in Seattle the weekend of August 4 to 6; and in San Diego the weekend of September 15 to 17.

One sign of the improving health of the sport has been a growing interest among race sites to host the APBA Gold Cup. The H1 Board is evaluating proposals and should have an announcement soon of where the oldest trophy in American motorsports will be held this summer.

Another sign that things are looking up is a growing interest in the sport among communities that would be new to Unlimited racing or that have not hosted a race in many years. Holding an event on the H1 Unlimited Racing Series requires a huge effort by hundreds of volunteers, the cooperation of local governments, and the involvement of many generous sponsors. I'm optimistic that at least a few of these new race-site organizers will be able to pull it off.

To provide these potential new race sites a helping hand, we've developed a

new Operations Manual this winter that offers advice on how to hold an Unlimited hydroplane race. It supplies detail about how to organize the committees that will do the work, how to prepare a pit area, and the equipment they will need (docks, fencing, cranes, radios, garbage cans, etc.). It also offers information on setting up the buoys, emergency response procedures, medical operations, and dozens of other details.

Meanwhile, the race teams are getting ready, too. We're very excited to have two promising rookies join the ranks of the best boat racers in the world this year. Both Dylan Runne and Brent Hall have many years of experience in limited-class hydros and should make a big impact on our sport. We're also excited for the return of Andrew Tate to the Unlimiteds and are looking forward to watching the continued excellent work of J. Michael Kelly, Corey Peabody, Dustin Echols, Jamie Nilsen, and Jimmy King on the racecourse. ❖

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ASSOCIATE EDITORS: Craig Fjarlie, Chris Tracy, Dick Sanders

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WEBSITE: unlimitednewsjournal.net

EDITOR: Unlimited NewsJournal, 14313 Beverly Park Road, Edmonds, WA 98026

Email: ajmuntz@icloud.com

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

PLEASE JOIN US AT THE NEXT MEETING OF UNLIMITEDS UNANIMOUS

2 p.m. on Sunday, March 12, 2023

Kenmore Public Library, 6531 NE 181st St., Kenmore, WA 98028