



January 2017

# UNLIMITED NEWSJOURNAL

*A Chronicle of Speed*

## The story behind the Squire Shop restoration project.

by Gary Laws

People ask me all the time about why my family and I would decide to buy an old deteriorating vintage unlimited hydroplane. Fair enough question, right? To be honest, the decision was pretty easy for us. An opportunity presented itself, so we figured, “sure, why not?” My wife, Kristy, has history with this particular boat, so that experience alone had my vote to do it. There is actually more to it than that. You can read more about it on our restoration website if you want to know the whole story. Here is how my family got involved in this whole adventure, what we’ve accomplished so far up to this point, and our expectations going forward.



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Gary Laws Collection

### A Date with Destiny

A friend of ours, Brad Haskin, stumbled upon a listing on Craigslist back in 2012 stating that someone was selling the former 1979 *The Squire Shop* hull. The asking price immediately got Brad’s attention and he quickly came up with this idea of pooling some friends together to all pitch in and buy the boat. We would then donate it to the Hydroplane & Raceboat Museum, to be restored at some point in the future. The idea was that if we had enough investors willing to go in, the costs for each person would be reasonable enough

that the average working person could probably afford it.

Brad knew I was a huge fan of the sport, but that’s all I ever was at this point. He wanted to know what I thought of the idea, so he called me and we discussed it. I didn’t even know this hull still existed, as nobody had seen it in years. After weighing the pros and cons, we figured the experience alone was worth it. The price seemed right, so we expressed our interest to be involved.

I wanted to get some assurances in place first before we committed to doing this, so Kristy and I met

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# Comments from the H1 chairman.

*We are proud to introduce a new feature for the Unlimited NewsJournal. Doug Bernstein, the newly appointed chairman of H1 Unlimited, has agreed to write a few columns for us during the course of the year to give us his perspective on what is happening with-in the sport of unlimited hydroplane racing and the direction that it is going. We are very grateful for his willingness to be a part of this publication and are excited to welcome him to the NewsJournal.*

by Doug Bernstein, H1 Chairman

**S**o, here's my first column for UNJ while serving as chairman of H1 Unlimited. As a lawyer for the past 35 years, this is a pleasant departure for me. I don't need to cite any law.

First, I'll answer the obvious questions: Who are you? Why are you doing this? What are you up to?

In my normal life, I work for Plunkett Cooney, a large law firm based in the Detroit area, with offices throughout Michigan, and in Indianapolis, Columbus, and Chicago. I head up our practice

group that primarily represents a variety of banks and other financial institutions. I also had the honor and privilege of representing the Ford Foundation and the Community Foundation for Southeast Michigan in putting together an \$816 million package to save workers' pensions in the City of Detroit's bankruptcy.

I am blessed to have a wonderful wife, daughter and dog. And, like you, I'm a huge fan of unlimited hydroplane racing.

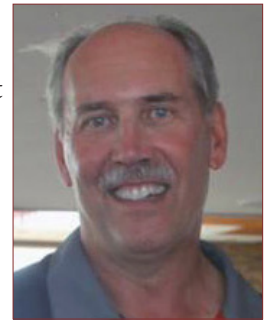
Until 2002, I watched races as an interested spectator, and then transitioned into a much more active role, serving as general counsel for Hydro-Prop from 2002 to 2004. After that, I served on the Board of Directors for Detroit River Regatta Association, and later became the attorney for H1, a member of its board, and a founding member of Detroit Riverfront Events, Inc. Without reservation, I can say that it is much easier just being a fan than taking an active role in the sport.

So why did I agree to become H1 Chairman? Because I was

asked. In my mind, if the board thought enough to ask me to serve as its chairman, then I owed it to this great sport, which has given me so many great memories and provided me with so many friendships, to give it a try.

Unlimited hydroplane racing has extremely passionate fans and participants. My job is to channel that passion into a plan to expand awareness in the form of more race sites, publicity, and race teams. We need to reduce the financial burden on the race sites and teams, and above all, we need to make sure that everyone involved is having fun. That means we have to consider new ideas and to work as a team in putting the plan together and carrying it out. The fans are a key component in spreading the word and in providing input as to how we can improve.

Every year, when the final heat in Detroit begins, Mark Weber



H1 Unlimited

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Letters may be edited for clarity and space.

and I have a beer together. Why? Because there's a tremendous sense of satisfaction in seeing that our efforts and those of our volunteers, sponsors, and participating race teams resulted in a spectacular event.

So, my goal is to have a beer (or other drink of your choice) with each of you who helped put together and execute the plan, and to reflect on the satisfaction of seeing it come to fruition. With luck, that will be a lot of beer for me.

I hope to see each of you in Seattle at the annual H1 Awards Banquet on January 14 at the Seattle Marriott Waterfront. Happy holidays!

## We love to hear from our readers.

Your latest editorial comment in UNJ [December 2016 issue] was spot-on regarding the need for more boats, races, and media coverage.

That last part about media coverage (or lack thereof) definitely struck a chord with me, particularly the comment about Seattle sports talk radio. For a long time now, I have been very disappointed at the shabby treatment that the local sport talk hosts give to Seafair and hydroplane racing in general.

I get that hydroplanes are not a topic that resonates with all sports fans, but specifically here in the Seattle and Puget Sound region, it

very much does matter to a lot of us. I don't expect sports talk radio programming to devote much airtime to the hydros, but I do wish that some of the know-it-all, blow-hard talk show hosts wouldn't bad-mouth and otherwise denigrate this sport in such a negative fashion.

I'm referring specifically to two or three of them that really aggravate me with their snide comments. One in particular, Danny O'Neil of KIRO 710, railed on last summer about how much he loathes the hydros and how in his view Seattle will never become a true major league city until it drops its affinity for Seafair hydroplane racing.

My view is that a lot of this attitude comes from outsiders or Johnny-come-latelies to the Seattle sports scene who are completely out of touch with Seattle cultural sports history. Most of these guys can only go back as far as the 1980s in their sports recall and seem to know nothing of the Seattle sports scene of the 1960s.

All of this negativity toward Seafair and the hydros is disheartening to those of us who follow ALL Seattle sports. It will only get worse as the generation gap widens between the current crop of sports talk folks and those of us who embrace the entire spectrum of Seattle sports lore.

Your article stirred me to write, as I have kept these thoughts to myself for years, but just wanted to air grievances over local sports talk radio's treatment of our beloved hydros.

As the saying goes, thanks for listening!

Ron Suttell  
Tacoma, WA

## Niles Mayfield passes away.



manager at the Hanford Nuclear Reservation near the Tri-Cities two years ago and had relocated to Spokane with his wife, Penny. The couple had just celebrated their 12th wedding anniversary the day before his death.

"Absolutely stunned," said former H1 Chairman Steve David when he heard the news. "We had dinner at San Diego three months ago. If ever there was a champion for unlimited hydros, Niles was that person. God bless him, and watch over Penny and the kids."

Brett Bowen, his assistant on the Water Follies media team, said Mayfield was passionate about his family and hydroplane racing and always had a big smile on his face.

His friend and UNJ correspondent Mac Clouse is working on a tribute of Niles Mayfield that we will publish in the February issue of the *NewsJournal*.

The world of unlimited hydroplane racing was saddened to learn of the sudden passing on December 12 of Niles Mayfield, the long-time media director for the Columbia Cup in the Tri-Cities, Washington.

Mayfield, aged 62, had retired from his job as a senior training

## PART TWO:

# A conversation with Mark Weber.

Last month, in the first part of our interview with Mark Weber, he told how his family started in boat racing, talked about his early years in various inboard classes, and his first rides in unlimited hydroplanes. This month, Weber tells about his years driving for Kim Gregory, his term as president of the American Power Boat Association, his effort to save the Detroit race in 2015, and offers some thoughts on the future of boat racing. The interview was conducted by Craig Fjarlie last summer at Madison.

**When Kim Gregory bought Steve Woomer's outfit in the middle of the 1998 season, what was the initial plan?**

We were only going to go to San Diego and Las Vegas.

**Hawaii?**

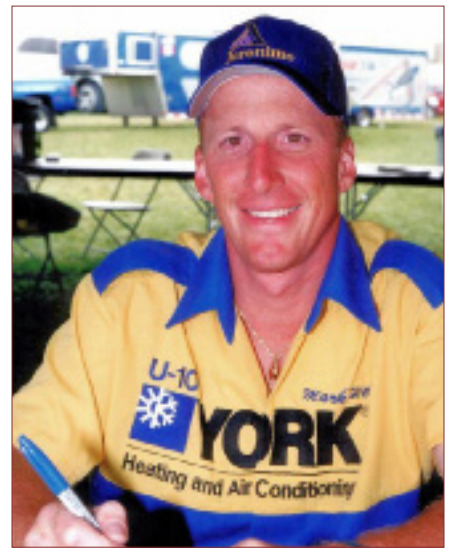
We weren't going to Hawaii.

**Oh.**

All we were gonna do is run the two races. In the beginning, run the two races, shake the team out, and just figure out who's who. We had to build the team up in the winter. We were going to go have fun. I knew Kim very well 'cause we worked together on the Inboard Board of

Governors. He ended up being like my second dad. Very, very supportive in a lot of things I did. Great job, very, very great guy. Then we decided, he goes, "You know what? We're going to go." And, of course, I didn't have any plans to go to Hawaii. "We had so much fun," he goes, "we decided, let's just go. It only costs \$7,000 to ship it. I didn't realize it gets subsidized. Let's just go to Hawaii and have fun." I'm like, "All right."

So we went there and he goes, "We'll just go learn some more. We learned some stuff, I want to practice." I'm like, "OK." The boat would never go faster than 160. 160, 160, 160. Well, back then, everyone knew there were systems in boats, I mean, c'mon. And the boat that we bought, I mean, it was



Karl Pearson

nine miles an hour slow. So we had a meeting with Jim Lucero in the truck. I said, "Look, we're a third-place boat. Evans in the *Appian Jeronimo* is faster. The only thing we can do is we gotta snooker 'em on the start." So I just kinda rolled 'em up there and I just kinda hit the brakes a little bit and kinda suckered 'em over a little bit. Coming around they were so worried about each other, we were the sleeper. It just kinda worked our way. So, we win the race. When I came back to the dock, which was gonna end my Budweiser contract, it ended up becoming victory lane. I was on the Budweiser payroll, I beat the *Budweiser* while on their payroll, and the rest is history with Kim and me.



Karl Pearson

Mark Weber opened the 1998 season as the driver of *Master Tire* (hull #9703). Here, he drives the boat onto the course at Norfolk, Virginia, where he would take second place.



Karl Pearson

Weber also handled the controls of Fred Leland's new *Miss Bell Forklift* (hull #9899) in 1998. Here, he drives it at the Gold Cup in Detroit. The boat raced in 2016 as *Miss Rock*.

**There are some things we'd like to explore with that. You didn't get to win another race with that team. How close were you and what would it have taken?**

Well, dollars.

**Yeah?**

And, the reason we never, the equipment was timed out. And you gotta understand, too, at that time there was a different time in the sport with the systems and everything else. I mean, there was the *Budweiser* and there was the *PICO* and then there was us. We were more consistent than the *PICO*, which is why we finished second in high points so many times. But at the end you come down to cubic dollars. That boat was getting timed out. I mean, the boat, the technology, the next generation boat. And, Kim knew it. So, we were racing within our means. And, you know, people would say, "Well, why doesn't Kim just get a new boat?" I said, "No, a smart business man does not get to a point in his life where he can have a million-dollar toy by making stupid decisions. He's a business

man." Yes, Kim wanted a new boat, but he wasn't going to do it and just spend—whether it was his retirement or whatever—he was not going to put himself in financial situations that were, you know, detrimental to his family. That's the way Kim was.

**Yeah.**

But, I knew that. That's also why I just, I mean, I still miss driving unlimited, but I don't miss driving all around, driving a second-place boat. That is, beating the *Budweiser*

budget. It's not who I am. Second sucks, is the first loser.

**Would you talk about George Stratton's accident?**

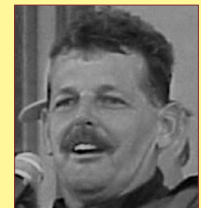
Sure.

**It hit you pretty hard.**

Uh, not as hard as I read about it. First of all, does it affect you? Absolutely. Everyone needs to understand George Stratton was my teammate, but George Stratton was far more than a teammate. His aunt, Leann, and uncle Paul who raised him, were some of my mom and dad's best friends. His aunt Leann, as I called her, and my mom, were best friends. She spent two months living in our house one year. In winter, which is hilarious, being from California. George picked me up when I was 14 years old. I'd never met him before. I drove from Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan, to Seattle, both my brother and I, getting dropped off at Mike Jones' for the summer to

## The death of George Stratton.

George Stratton took the *Appian Jeronimo* onto Mission Bay in San Diego for a test run early in the morning of Sunday, September 17, 2000. As he approached the Crown Point turn at the end of the back straightaway, a spot where sea breezes often come through the channel, the boat took a couple of bounces then climbed straight into the air, rotated upside down, then dove for the water nose first. When it hit, the force of the water separated the boat's windshield from the cockpit, either because the nose hit the bottom of the shallow, man-made bay or because the windshield was hit by the boat's broken canard wing. The result subjected Stratton to a tremendous rush of water as he sat strapped in his seat. He was airlifted to a local hospital, where he was declared dead about an hour later. Stratton's was the only fatality to occur in unlimited hydroplane racing in the past 34 years.





Karl Pearson

Weber's second and final race victory in unlimiteds came while at the controls of *Wildfire* in Honolulu in 1998. At right, he accepts the championship trophy.



Craig Fjarlie

go racing. That's how I met George Stratton. He was, you know, family.

**So he was older than you.**

Yes. It was just, you know, never the same in the team. But with George, obviously that was extremely difficult when it happened. I actually wanted to race. George was not a quitter. We're racing. Kim called me and I knew, if George was alive, that he would never be the same after what I heard on the radio. I told Kenny, "I don't want to remember George that way, I'm going back to the truck." He said, "That's fine." Kenny and I just got bummed out. There's nothing wrong with that. We were in the truck debriefing,

Lori was at the hotel. All of a sudden the 5's over. He said, "How the hell, he can't be over. He was returning to the pit area." We knew because we were listening to our crew, 'cause the radios were all lined up in the truck. The boat just blew over? OK, we'll talk over the race. Then all of a sudden I'm looking at the reactions of the people. I don't need that. Something's not right. They sit there. We kinda waited. You get that pit in your stomach. Then all of a sudden they were talking in code and I could hear them a little bit. I went to Kenny and I go, "There's something, aw son of a bitch." And I said, "Did he...?" And he just turned around and Kenny looked at me. I go, "Just go over there, I don't want to hear it." He comes back over and he looks at me and he goes, "It's not good." And I said, "I gotta find out where Lori's at, because she should be coming over to the pits sometime soon." She was across the street at that Paradise Point, whatever it's called now, as she doesn't need to get up for a 6:30 physical. She comes over at 8:30, 9 o'clock. All I'm doing is timing runs, no big deal.

And, uh, we knew that it was really, really bad. Kim had just

gotten there and the helicopter fired up. And, Kim gets that look. "I'm going to the hospital and I gotta go to the hotel." So then Kenny comes to me. Kim called up. He called Kenny's cell. He says, "Go grab Mark." "He's right here." "Close the door, I want to talk to you boys." That's when Kim told me, he said, "George didn't make it."

At that point, it was just a great big "F\*\*k!" I said, "All right, what do you want us to do?" He just goes, "You boys do whatever you want, I don't really care. I'm gonna go deal with this." I said, "Well, are we racing or not?" He said, "Mark, you're the driver, Kenny, you're the crew chief. It's your race team, you guys do whatever you want." I looked at Kenny, I said, "We're racing." I said, "We are racing. We're not quitters. George was not a quitter. We are racing." Kenny goes, "OK."

He comes back to me 15 minutes later. Now at this point I went down, I told every driver. I just got eye contact. I mean, I'll never forget that walk. Worst walk of my life. Everyone's waiting and only two of us knew in the whole



Hydroplane and Raceboat Museum

Mark and Lori Weber

place. Then Kim called Jerry and he knew. I let them feel it out on that end. Kenny goes to me, he said, “Mark, we have a problem.” Back up a minute. Kenny would come to me on Sunday morning. Every time I’d either fist pump him or I’d smack his shoulder and I’d look him right in the eye and I’d say, “Are we ready?” Every single week, “You’re damn right we’re ready.” That was my way of him telling me as my crew chief that “I have your back, everything is right on this boat, game on.”

We needed to do that, that’s the confidence you have in your team, your crew chief. That’s a pact we have. He comes to me, I said, “Kenny, we’re racing the boat.” “No, we’re not.” I said, “You know, quit getting’ stupid.” I’m getting pissed. We are racing today.” He said, “For three years you and I had a pact.” And he goes, “Well, you haven’t asked me the question yet.” We leave the drivers’ meeting and I said, “We’re not ready yet?” He goes, “Ask me the question.” I said, “What question do you want me to ask you? What are you talkin’ in riddles for?” He goes, “Mark, it’s Sunday morning.” He goes, “Ask me the question you’ve asked me every



From the left, Kim Gregory, Mark Weber, and Matt Ruhlen.

Hydroplane and Raceboat Museum

single race we’ve ever run together and then you sit there and it’s a conversation you and I will have.”

All right. “I said, “Are we ready?” “Listen,” he goes, “no, we’re not.” I said, “Why not? Everything on the boat was fine yesterday.” He said, “I want you to walk out on the deck of the truck.” He goes, “I want to show you something.” He said, “That’s the crew that is going to work on your boat all day long. I don’t have your back. I can’t guarantee you everything on this boat is gonna be perfect.” I looked at him, I’m like, “All right, you’re right, you’re right. We’re done.”

And, so we went to UHRA and they said, “Well, are you racing today?” I said, “I’m running the first

heat.” “Why are you running today?” I said, “There’s nothing in the rule book, I’ll scratch when I want to scratch, I don’t have to tell any of you boys.” They just kinda looked at me. I said, “You don’t want to go there with me. Are you gonna deny me to race? Does the boat not meet the rules?” They said, “Well, what is your intention because of the race schedule?” And I said, “Well, for the good of the sport I will tell you that we are only going to make a start, but we are not scratching until after I make the start. That’s our decision to make, not yours. I don’t want to hear about it. It’s not a media, it’s our race team, we run it, not you.” They’re all kind of like, “OK.”

So we decided we would make a start and then I would peel off, put the boat on the trailer, pack up this junk, and get back home. We had, obviously, a lot to do this week. I’m never forgetting, going down for the start, I’m coming down the backstretch in San Diego, I never lifted. It’s [makes a sound like a tightly wound turbine] and I could really carry that right sponson because it had flaps on the wings. I could just carry that thing all the way down. It was on both sides, using both flaps.



Karl Pearson

In 1999, 2000, and 2001, Mark Weber drove the same boat (hull #8700) under a variety of different names. Here, he cruises onto the racecourse at Lake Havasu, Arizona, in 1999 with the boat named *Miss Havasu*.

Kenny's going, "UHRA is saying, 'Mark, you need to peel off.'" I say, "You can tell UHRA to go f\*\*k themselves, I will come in when I'm damn good and ready. Or they can come catch me." Kenny goes, "Um, OK." (Again, makes a sound like a tightly wound turbine.) I went the whole lap. I said, "What are they gonna do, fire me?" My teammate was just killed three hours ago. Bring it on." I'm like, "This is not your...this is our show, this is our time right now."

Nobody said a word, honest to God truth. Exactly how it happened on the radio communication. And then we peeled off. That's when I told them. That's it. We jumped on an airplane. When I was sitting in the airport in San Diego, I was talking to my travel agent booking my return flight to Las Vegas that Wednesday. Then I went home, took care of what we needed to take care of and headed back to Vegas, take care of what we needed to do at the races.



Mark Weber talks to his crew while in the cockpit of his boat in 2001.

Hydroplane and Raceboat Museum

**The team continued.**

It was never, I never thought it was the same. From that point, well, then they had the other boat.

**That was the same boat repaired.**

Well, yeah, they got George's boat repaired. It wasn't worn out.

**You did drive it the next season, did you not?**

Yeah.

**Did it feel different than the one you had been driving?**

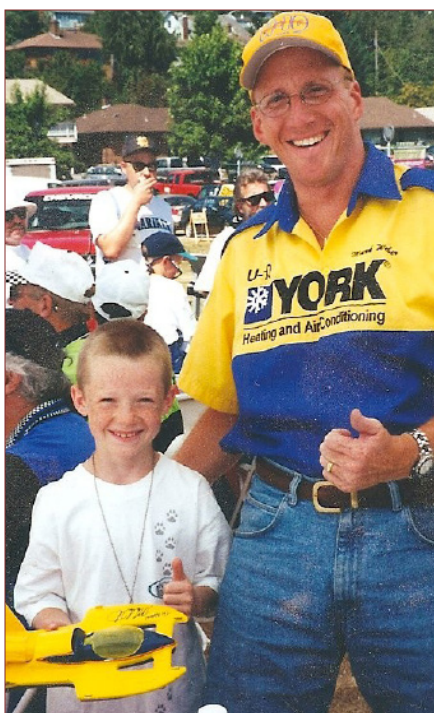
No, I drove the boat I had again. Now we're another year behind. All the other technology kept going. I mean, our technology didn't change. So, we were trying to get the Jeronimo boat up and going, and my brother drove it part of the time. And then I, uh, we bought a marina and then, at that point I just... quite frankly. See, if I could have won it would be one thing. It just never really handled. And Lori didn't want me to race 'em.

**Did you stay involved with the inboard classes at all, for a little while?**

Actually, I never really raced much. Not just because, "been there, done that." I mean, understand, I'd been racing for, my 39th year of racing. I'm only 52. So, let's see, then we got to a point where Tony Stalder called me and asked if I wanted to drive this, and Tony is a great guy.

**OK.**

He wanted to bring the boat back out and his wife, Pat, said, "Why don't you see if Mark will drive it." 'Cause I drive a boat like I own it. I'll tear it up, but I'm not gonna do something stupid. I mean. I love drivers that go into a turn, that are in the middle, there's a roostertail on both sides. There is nothing positive that's going to come out of that. When the inside boat spirals and they all come in bitching because they got cut off. No, you didn't get cut off, you had a shitty start. I mean, they go from hero to zero. Drives me crazy. And, so, I drive 'em like I own 'em. I will...you can bang 'em up, but you just, we've



Mark Weber and a fan.

Hydroplane and Raceboat Museum



done this, we've had some motor problems, but you know what? We're having fun and we laugh and it's...Then Andrew Christopher, two years ago, he was talking to me and everything else and he asked me to drive the *Old Crow*. That thing is wicked fast.

### What class is that?

National Modified. And last year, Dan Kanfoush retired and I sat in that. Amazing. Then last year we were running, they blew the motor up the last race Dan drove it. There was a fuel pump problem so it never ran last year at the Nationals. So we tested again in Dayton this year and it's wicked. But, there are obligations to the family. They couldn't make this race. But Big Bird and I, Ray Lynn, who I used to go at it with all the time in 5-litres, it's gonna be him and I. It's gonna be a great race. And then Waterford, it should be a lot of fun. So, yeah, we're just having fun. When Lori and I were driving, we drove 14 miles and she said, "You know what? It's been a long time since we came to a boat race and we really

aren't directing it," although we are kinda managing, helping. And we just enjoyed the ride in this morning. We talked about how much we kinda miss it and then, you know, it's just fun going to a boat race, hang out with friends. It's just fun. It's a hobby. It's gotta be fun.

### Before we get into APBA politics, we'd like to ask about another class. You drove Unlimited Lights.

Yes.

### That kind of petered out and was replaced by GP West. Do you have any thoughts about that? Was it the right way to go or did Unlimited Lights get a raw deal?

Well, Unlimited Lights, if you look at the Unlimited Lights organization, you understand, I'm a two-time national champion in the class. I was very much instrumental in being involved in Unlimited Lights when it came early on. Where I think Unlimited Lights made mistakes is just how, some of the decisions that they made. I don't

think anybody did anything intentionally or maliciously or anything else. But history will have shown—and there's something amazing about history—that the direction they were going was not was not going to be sustainable. So, when it didn't work, frankly I wasn't surprised.

Yeah...

For the sake of powerboat racing, you want every series to be successful. I just think that they could've made some different choices. But, again, at the time I'm sure they thought they were doing what's best for the sport and I give 'em a lot of credit for their effort.

Yeah, OK.

It's easy to be a Monday morning quarterback, but, again, I'm not surprised.

### Was that maybe when they included the addition of blowers?

No, I think it was kind of the, it was more the management direction. But I really wasn't on the inside.

Yeah.

I guess I don't really know.

### Well, you became APBA president. How did that process work? Were you a region chairman for a while first?

Heavens, when I was 18 years old I was in the club. Became president. I ran the region. I became region chairman. And every one of those projects I took an organization that was a little stressed. When I was



Karl Pearson

Weber spent part of the 2001 campaign behind the wheel of the former *Winston Eagle* (hull #9010). In Seattle, above, it raced as *Diamond Lil's*. The boat saw action this past season as the *U-57 Spirit of Detroit*.



Mike Weber (left) and his brother, Mark.

inboard chairman I was there for five years. There was a three-year limit on it. They got rid of the limit to keep me in for five years. When I got in there was a thousand dollars in the bank and all the equipment was worn out. When we left—we worked as a team, it wasn't just me—we had a new trailer, we had a new clock 'cause we went from the old mechanical to digital, we had \$4,000 in the bank. You know, where you just do things. It was a huge team effort.

The Mach series was going on. We had all the race chairmen actually meeting away from it and we made all the races the same, entry fee the same, drivers' meeting time, just kinda like we had our own little series going. Then Tony Scartine hired me as the inboard coordinator for nine years. We had our office. I also ran boat races in Florida. I got out of that. Mike Jones, actually, that new Plan 2000, which again on paper, I wish it would've worked. The problem was the organization wasn't ready

for it. It was the right idea, but I knew that it wasn't going to work. I was the first and only competition director in APBA. But, it just, it just wasn't... The plan was right, clearly it wasn't the right time. History will show now that we need something like that, but it just didn't work out. When that happened I resigned from that position 'cause I bought a marina. I knew I needed to go in a different direction.

#### **Mm hmm.**

So then, APBA kinda had to get their... There was a big political thing, which I was on the outside watching in. And, of course, APBA kind of took back the organization to the old way it was run and I understood why they did it. We won't get into what I believe in the structure of APBA now. But Don Allen called me up one day on the phone and said that a bunch of guys had talked and they think myself or Mark Wheeler are the next two guys in line and you need to decide

who wants to go first, and hung up the phone. Huh, OK... And that's why I became vice president and then president.

So that was kinda all in the plan. When I was president, it was clear we tried some things and the critics out there that will criticize some of the things we tried. I'm perfectly fine with that. I just consider the sources. But, the end of the day there are two things that are facing the sport and it's now more evident than ever. The inability and the lack of equipment is one of the single largest barriers to entry. When I became president, I addressed three things. The biggest thing that we had to do is remove the barriers to entry. That could be equipment, that could be cost, that could be inability to try it. That's why the driving schools were started.

#### **Yeah.**

It was the right thing to do. When we hired the guy, he was the right guy to hire. The problem was the California economy was going in the tank. Chris Fairchild and I flew out there. We knew something was wrong. Well, of course, it didn't work. The guy stiffed us on, like, \$30-, \$35,000, which is a lot of money, but imagine if it would've worked. So, now you look at some of the outboard classes that actually have motors that you can buy right off the thing. I just heard the other day they had 16 entries at one race. Like, Gee, really? You can go buy something and so, I will contest that it was the right thinking, it was just obviously the wrong timing.

And, now the driving schools. The naysayers can say what they want. I know 12 people that are

racing in this sport because they went to the driving school. And there are officials in the sport 'cause they went to the driving school. APBA has to figure that out. It's been a very, very difficult time.

One of the things that I addressed when I was president is, I looked at the past 20 years of membership. If you took the last 20-year trend and you went five years fast-forward, which was actually a year-and-a-half ago, you would find out that we were going to be in a very precarious position. The reason is that because the number of entries will be so low that the clubs will be disillusioned. Why am I going to put all this effort in when you don't have the competitors? And, guess what? We are right. I'm not that smart. I'm smart enough to ask an economist, a professor, Mark Wheeler. I said, "Mark, this is your job. I want you to—last 20 years—I want you to forecast the next five." Really! It's math. It's simple math. But, we're there. So now what do we do?

So, after I was president, I was done. Put me out to pasture. I'm tired of arguing with agendas and egos. The pay's not that good, by the way. [Laughter.] Spent thousands and thousands of dollars a year being president. So, I became Inboard chairman because I was asked, which, in those days, they didn't have somebody to do it. It's just somebody else's turn. You know, we are trying some stuff. But this sport...the by-laws and the current way APBA is structured, and the by-laws, is not sustainable. I don't care what anybody says.

**Yeah.**

And, you know, people sit there and say, "Well, look how successful ACHA is." OK, they are very successful. But that's not fair to APBA, either, because they're not a national organization. They're a series in an area that can buy boats, and lease them to racers. Buying people racing equipment is a helluva good deal for the racers.

## What is ACHA?

ACHA is the American Canadian Hydroplane Association, a promotional company in eastern Canada.

**Oh, OK.**

What they did is they wanted Grand Prix back. So they actually bought equipment and they gave you the boat. They gave you the boat, the trailer. You gotta provide the motors and if you break it, you gotta fix it. That was fantastic. They said, well, we got two choices. You can buy your own stuff or we'll give it to you. You got no promoter, well, let me think about this. It was great. They had the resources to do it. The current (APBA) by-laws, I'm very frustrated under the stuff there in force. It's no one's fault. We are operating within the by-laws. I will argue the by-laws, bottom line, it's not working.

**They were developed in another era.**

Yeah! And I don't blame anybody. The thing is, it's just not working. All this equipment changes.

**Yeah.**

And you know, when I came up, we were two weeks ago, you guys better figure this out. I said the one thing APBA better understand, APBA does not own the race sites and they do not own the boats. If you think we are going to park a \$75,000 5-litre because of APBA, I mean to tell you. I bet you any money we'd still race our boats, but I could be wrong. I said, "So let's get racing and let's try to find



Hydroplane and Raceboat Museum

Mark Weber's final ride in an unlimited came at Detroit in 2003 aboard the *Miss Chrysler Jeep* (hull #8700). The boat was built in 1987 as the *Miller American*.



Karl Pearson

out if there's a better way to do it." Because, it's not easy in a national organization. It's difficult. You know, give Mark Wheeler a lot of credit. I wouldn't want to be president. The Internet is the best source of information and we all know it, right? Who looks in encyclopedias any more, or goes to a library. It's all on your iPhone.

**Yeah.**

When I can sit there and say something to everybody, where sponsors can be watching, by the way, and I don't have to be accountable to anybody, and it's for you to refute what I say. It's, it's... Look at the presidential race. It's crazy. Everything is a reality show.

**Yeah, yeah.**

Quite frankly, some of the pit areas when I'm at a boat race look like a reality show. And it's a shame, you know, it's a shame. When I raced, before I came back driving, I used to go to a race and qualify and have to make the final. There's somebody that went home, didn't make

the final 'cause he didn't make the cut. Now, you have four boats, they think like they owe you the world. And, it's just that, from a race site standpoint, it's just not healthy for the future of the sport. It's not. And there's not an easy answer either, I will admit. But again, the definition of insanity is to continue to do the same thing and expect different results.

**Yup. On another subject, what was your role in saving the Detroit unlimited race in 2015?**

[Weber laughs.]

**Is it secure now?**

This year's all done.

**But, long-term, down the road?**

Are you sponsoring it? Give me a five-year contract!

**Well...**

It's all economics. So, OK, the DRRA versus the DREI. So, the DRRA, first of all, they tried. It was very, very difficult for them to keep the event going because they did not have a title sponsor. We're in the Motor City. We build automobiles here. It'd be kind of like if Boeing went south in Seattle. It would probably have a negative effect on the economy.

**Yeah.**

So, a lot of effort for the Board of Directors, and I give them a lot of credit for a lot of things that they were trying to do, specifically Bill Rands and the Rands family. But then, we had a yacht club that was

the presenting sponsor, and it's just not a sustainable business plan. That's no disrespect for what they were doing, because actually I give 'em a lot of credit, because they made it happen. The last four years, I told both my brothers, every time, you are witnessing a miracle to have this race on. And, that is a credit to the organization.

So it came to the point, keeping in mind we had only five boats running that Sunday two years ago, that was pretty bad. So, now you have a stressed race site, Now you have a marginal show. The Board of Directors made decisions that they would not keep funding without a major sponsor. And I give them, I support and I agree with their decision.

With that said, I also knew that running a Grand Prix race and an unlimited race was going to be very challenging because of expectations. You could take a Grand Prix race and go run it at Quake on the Lake and probably be a superstar. And that's no discredit to the DRRA. And, I just knew that there were a lot of challenges and things. Everyone was trying their hardest.

So Lori Weber came to me and said, "I'd like you to do me a favor. I'd like you to go in and I'd like you to resign tomorrow from DRRA." "OK, well, I don't have another job. We don't live month-to-month." She goes, "I want my husband back." She said, "You're not happy." I'm like, "OK, doesn't bother me none." So I did. And then I was out. I quit the company. I wished them well. I didn't want to do anything to get in the way. So it wasn't but two days later they closed the company. That was never my intention.

Then, after I resigned from the company, we were trying to get a

meeting with UAW/GM that never happened. I got a phone call and I went by and told The Roostertail, Shawna Peplinski and Tom Schoenith, that I had left the company and that I can't run a race. "Well," she says, "I want you to call UAW/GM." I said, "We've been waiting months for them." Well, anyway, it wasn't but a week later that we had lunch.

Well, at that point the DRRA already closed their doors and we're having a meeting, but it did not get approved until June as a contract. I knew in May (2015) we were pretty close. So at that point I had two meetings. I handpicked a Board of Directors, which was Bruce Madej and Doug Bernstein. The only deal was, they told me, "Do you want to own this? You can have it, own it." I go, "Well, I don't want to own this, but I'm not interested in all this democracy. [Laughter.] I want to be the boss and I don't really give a damn about titles." Titles are nothing more, as far as I'm concerned, than a bunch of letters under somebody's name on a

business card. And, if you look in the program, I mean, yes, I am the president, and then we have a secretary and we have a treasurer. But, we're all just directors. We're all equals. I do run the day-to-day operations of the company. So as far as the future, you know, it's gone really, really well.

**Yeah.**

But, at the end of the day, it's simple math. It takes more sponsors than admission to pay for this event. Without a title sponsor, I think the race will always be... Well, without a title sponsor it will be extremely challenged. And I can promise and assure everyone, as long as Mark Weber, Doug Bernstein, and Bruce Madej are involved in this organization, the race will only happen if we pay our bills, or it will not happen. Period.

**Yeah.**

Zero tolerance. So we have a lot of things in play. There are changes

going on in UAW/GM. We don't know how that will affect us. We have Jamie Morrison from the University of Michigan, he also plays for Washington, pro football. He's on our marketing team. We have Jason Brown, publicity. We have probably assembled some of the best team that is within our budget that we've ever had. We have never been in a better position since 2008, when we lost Chrysler-Jeep Superstores. But it's still economics. So I knew when I started the race a year ago, I would not do the race one year. I would not do it. In fact, I told UAW/GM when I met with them, I'm not interested in a one-year wonder. I have moved on with my life. My wife is supporting me. I was going to go back to probably being in the marine business. I was gonna go, I was fine. I was done and quite happy, actually.

**Yeah.**

I had complete support from my wife. And, you know, here I am running one of the largest unlimited races. People say, how do you run a race in 67 days? Surround yourself with 250 amazing volunteers. That's how you do it. Then you have a company that's got your back. It's not Mark Weber. We're just directing, you know? They're the orchestra. I guess I'm the conductor. That's a real good analogy.

**What do you see for the future of unlimiteds? Are they going to be able to continue to hold on?**

I hope change.

**Can Steve David bring it about?**  
[Interview was conducted before



Weber (right) holds a model of the old *Gale V* at the 2016 Detroit race. With him are Tom and Diane Schoenith.

Karl Pearson

Steve David announced his resignation – Ed.]

Can Steve David bring it about? Well, he can't do it alone. I think having Steven David in that position is extremely positive. But, I don't think the current structure and how it is in place... It may continue, I don't know that it will become more successful. Much like APBA, I think there are a lot of good people in place. Some things are being tried that are very, very encouraging. I support their efforts, I'm just not sure the way the structure is organized they can continue.

A perfect example is the owners have a lot invested and so do the race sites. I will tell you that there is this give and take with the race sites in the unlimiteds. I will argue, if we went to divorce court, the judge would deny the divorce and tell you that you have no choice but to stay married. I don't know how you're going to race without race sites. And, with all due respects, race sites, I don't know how you can have an unlimited race without owners. So your divorce is denied. Figure it out. [Pause.] I think the organization's structures should change. I don't know. I'm not interested in getting involved in that part of it.

**Yeah.**

But I support Steve. He's been very, very supportive of what we're doing in Detroit and that was a big part of my decision. He had my back and I knew that, and that was a big part of last year's success. His leadership made it easier for me to execute the race from 67 days out. And, I give them a lot of credit for that.

I wish they would all come to the table. You know, they sit there and say it's not easy to have all the answers. We were talking the other day... Well, the race sites need to get more money. Well, wait a minute! As much as a race team is short, why is it going to race sites? Why can H1 bring stuff to the table? They're running the series. I mean, it's like as long as you have a sponsor... The crews need sponsorship, H1 needs money, and the race sites gotta raise enough money to put on a show. So everybody's gotta bring something to the table.

The challenge is, for H1 to be able to sell series sponsors. You gotta have a series with all the races. Then that will, you hope, help the teams get sponsors. But, that's not an easy task. Motorsports in general, and this is a credit to H1, is going through a transition. Those days are over. The days of the '80s will never... Just look at other forms of motorsports. And, shall we, dare say, the Holy Grail NASCAR. Let me tell you, they got their problems, too, because of corporate sponsorship, or lack of.

**They've got sections in their grandstands that are empty now.**

And, who can argue, what an amazing organization that is. And they are still. Times have changed. Again, the definition of insanity. But, as far as Steven in the role, I mean, I support him. We have agreed to disagree, but at the end, I have no doubts that we both have the same interest. And, that's all anybody can bring to the table. As long as you do that, you look me in the eye and you don't lie to me, then we're fine. Steven and I, there's no questions.

**Kind of as a wrap-up, someone who was an APBA category chairman while you were president said he never had any disagreements with you, but he described your style as firm and direct. Would you say that's fair?**

Yup. You always know where you stand with me.

**Are you going to stay involved for a while?**

Yeah.

**You got a ride here.**

I got two hot rods. The other part of it, not so much.

**The Detroit race?**

Oh, yeah.

**But not the leadership.**

I'm on my farewell tour. I just haven't announced it.

**OK. [Laughter.] Well, we're pretty much done if you are.**

You're the first one I've spoken a whole sentence to, so...

**That sounds like a compliment.**

If you don't want to know the answer, don't ask the question.

**All right, well, thank you.**

Yup.

# Squire Shop restoration project.

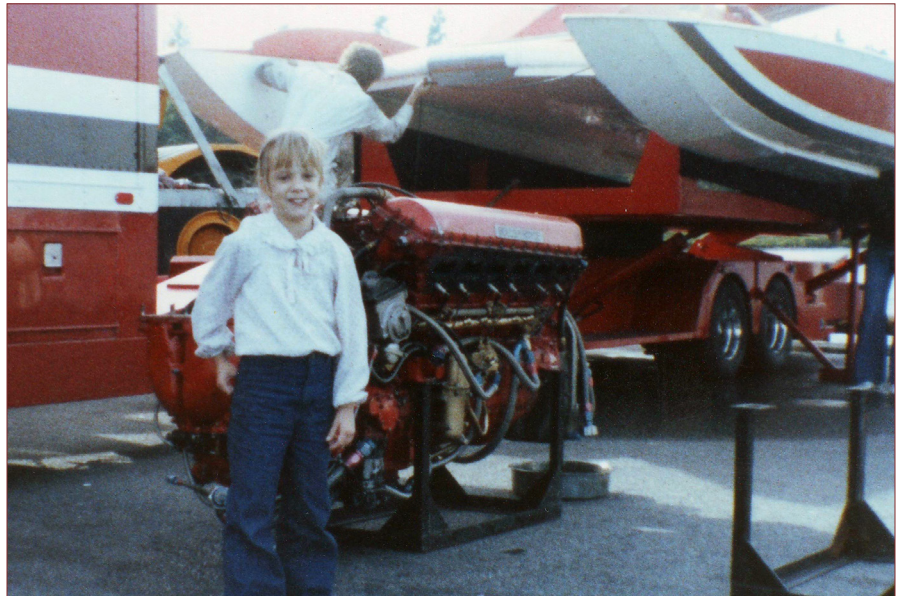
Continued from page 1

with Dave Williams (director of the Hydroplane & Raceboat Museum) to come up with a plan and verify the museum's interest in the project. Once we all agreed on a course of action, we decided to do it. This was truly a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

As we were about ready to contact the seller and purchase the boat, a fellow by the name of Jim Dickinson beat us to it and literally bought it the day before.

Apparently, the boat had been for sale for a long time with no takers. We never considered anyone else stepping in and buying it from underneath us, but Jim did just that. He had no idea that we (or anyone else for that matter) were interested at all, so he bought it simply because he thought it would be cool to own a hydroplane.

Jim had plans of his own to restore the boat, but we were not ready to give up so easily. We got in touch with Jim some time afterwards, and let him know that if he ever wanted to sell the boat, that we



Gary Laws

In October 1980, 6 year old Kristy Glenn and her mother heard *The Squire Shop* testing on Lake Washington and decided to watch. Between runs, Chip Hanauer asked the little girl if she wanted to take a ride in the boat. She was too scared to say yes, but did have her picture taken by the boat. Today, Kristy is married to Gary Laws, the author of this story, and was a supporter of her husband's dream to own the boat and get it restored.

were still very much interested in it.

About a year later, Jim was ready to let go of the hull, as he was sympathetic to our cause, but only if he could trade it for another one. I figured the odds were slim to none that any other hull existed with a similar price, condition, and that also came with a trailer. I quickly got in touch with Dave Williams

again to see if any such boat was available in Washington state.

Dave knew of only one that fit the bill: the 1963 *Tahoe Miss*. The hull and trailer were stored north of Seattle in Kenmore, Washington, and rumors over the years had circulated as to its current condition. Jim also wanted a round-nose hull and this was the only boat available that met Jim's requirements.

We all agreed to meet at the museum to work out a deal, which quickly resulted in us all traveling up north to see the boat in person.

To our surprise, Jim saw the potential of the *Tahoe Miss* and we struck a deal on the spot. We literally had to buy the *Tahoe Miss* initially ourselves and immediately trade it to Jim in exchange for *The Squire Shop*. So, technically, the 1963 *Tahoe Miss* was the first hydroplane we ever owned, if only for a few minutes.



Gary Laws

The old *Squire Shop* hull as it sat, available for purchase.



Gary Laws

The 1963 *Tahoe Miss* became a key ingredient in the effort to purchase *Squire Shop*.

Another friend of ours and museum volunteer Doug Brown agreed to store the boat for us until the museum was ready to take possession of it. Dave told us it could be awhile, but Doug was okay with it and we all worked out a plan to get the boat from Bellingham back down to Doug's property in Monroe. In addition to adding Kristy's parents, Edwin and Carol Glenn, into the team, Doug was included as well for his generosity of storing the boat and providing transportation of the boat for us. Our ownership group now consisted of five people, as Brad Haskin was no longer interested once the opportunity with Jim arose again. There was something about a button standing in his way, if I remember it correctly.

That was our plan initially. We buy the boat, store it until the museum was ready to take possession of it, and that was it. We would then donate it, get a nice tax write-off for our efforts, and just be satisfied with knowing we had done our part to help save another legend from the landfill. Sure, we would get a few perks for our efforts along

the way for doing this for the museum. However, the experience alone was worth it to us. This journey would continue for the rest of our lives.

### Living the Dream

As time went on while we waited for the call from the museum, I got even more interested in the history of the boat and the team itself. Chip Hanauer has always been my favorite driver, and with this boat being the one he got his first victory

in, it was a no-brainer for me.

Edwin came up with the idea that we should bring the boat out for Seafair as a static display, so we decided to do just that. If nothing else, it was a great promotional tool to bring awareness and public support towards the project itself.

So, that is exactly what we did. Craig Cozza (a close friend and co-worker of mine) made some much-needed welding repairs to the trailer, we pressure washed the hull, and got it prepped for display duty and the road trip back to Seattle.

It is now Seafair 2013, and we got a lot of attention from everyone who stopped by to see the boat. Edwin and his son, Kevin Glenn, even designed and sold collectible pins to promote and raise funds towards the restoration. The hull had last raced in 1992 under the U-7 *Thor Racing* banner, and it hadn't been seen publically in a very long time.

Dan Walters (former *Squire Shop* crewmember) stopped by to see the boat up close and shared a very interesting story with us about the fate of the original engine



Gary Laws

Former *Squire* crewmember Dan Walters was among those who saw the boat at Seafair.





The driver of *The Squire Shop*, a 25-year-old Chip Hanauer

cowling from our boat. He told us the cowling had blown off in 1980 during Seafair when the engine exploded. As far as Dan knew, it was never recovered from the bottom of Lake Washington. He said the team tried to find it, but never did and Dan believed it was likely still there.

I questioned whether or not it could really still be down there after all these years, so Kristy and I started digging into the story further. After some time had passed, we encountered many dead ends and very few credible leads as to whether anyone ever found and/or recovered it. One such lead led us to the Divers Institute of Technology in Seattle and a rumored video recording of the cowling being found years earlier while searching for a lost propeller from the U-37 team. This may have been the only truly recognizable piece left from that 1979 *The Squire Shop* hull in existence. I knew then that I had done everything I could to find it.

Eventually, we got in touch with Jesse Rodocker and learned

that he had indeed found something that may fit the description and he still had a video recording of it. Once he emailed us a copy of the video, we got the proof we needed. The cowling did still exist after all. Had it not been for J. Michael Kelly (driver of the U-37 at the time), Jesse may have never found the cowling at all. It was during the search for a lost propeller that Jesse coincidentally found the cowling. Talk about a needle in a hay stack.

It took us two separate attempts to retrieve the engine cowling from the lake, but we did it with the help of the Divers Institute of Technology, the Seattle Police Department, Jesse Rodocker, Chip

Hanauer, and Sam Bissett. Chip was starring in his own Internet-based show called "The Boat Guy," which Sam also produced. I contacted Sam about using this recovery as a great idea for an episode on the show, which Chip agreed. You can find it on YouTube titled "The Boat Guy: Dredging Up Hydroplane History."

Once the cowling was recovered, I let the online hydroplane community know we were successful in our latest attempt. This news led to a chance email from famed hydroplane collector Dave Bartush over in Detroit.

Dave emailed me three pictures of items that he had that he thought



[Top] The moment the engine cowling flew off of *The Squire Shop* during the 1980 World Championship Race in Seattle. Notice that it is colliding with the rear wing as it departs.

[Above] The recovered cowling and the team that recovered it

we may be interested in for the project. The first picture was of a Squire cowling from a much earlier boat, possibly the U-64 or U-65 versions, which wasn't the boat we had. The second photo was of one of the 1982-1983 vertical stabilizer skins. Again, not the right one for our specific version of the boat. But, the third photo definitely got our attention, as I had no idea this piece was still around somewhere.

Dave had the original 1979 *Circus Circus* driver's cowling in his possession, which for whatever reason wasn't included with the sale of that boat to former *Squire Shop* owner Bob Steil a couple years earlier. The original driver's cowling from *The Squire Shop* was destroyed in the 1981 crash when Chip Hanauer was driving. This cowling was built exactly the same as the one that was destroyed, as they both came out of the same mold.

After a few months of hard negotiations with Dave to buy the cowling, we finally agreed on a price we could both live with. The trick now was how to get it from Detroit back to Seattle without breaking the bank to do so. My good friend and current U-11 team

owner Scott Raney volunteered to bring the cowling back to Seattle from the upcoming races in Madison, if we could somehow get it there in time.

I then went to the Internet to request help to see if anyone from the Detroit area was planning on going to the races, hoping someone could bring the cowling along for us. Warner Costin stepped up big-time and volunteered to put the cowling in his truck and bring it down, and we were very appreciative of his generosity.

Now that we had both cowlings in our possession, my efforts shifted to the financial aspects. It's no secret, a vintage hydroplane restoration is not cheap by any means. The good news is that *The Squire Shop* was mostly built from wood construction, which is not nearly as expensive as honeycomb aluminum alternatives.

You hear all the time about how challenging it is to obtain funding in motor sports, right? Every current H1 team faces this every season, but it's always been that way. It takes a lot of work to secure sponsorships. That is the approach I took. I wanted to treat the restoration project like a

business and not a hobby.

I figured I had nothing to lose by trying, so I put a business plan and proposal together. I did my homework, too, as I wanted to ensure I had the information I needed on realistic costs associated with the project, the timeline it would take to restore the hull, and how such a project like this would benefit the company I was seeking assistance from. Former driver Jerry Hopp would probably have told me to pray for a miracle. This most certainly was the case in this circumstance.

Fortunately for us, I struck gold on my first attempt. I had pursued and accomplished the impossible in many people's eyes. Nobody was more surprised than Dave Williams, but weeks of preparation and research had truly paid off. I can't disclose any details about how those negotiations went, but I can say I was successful in obtaining significant funding towards the project.

During this time, I had built a website chronicling the challenges and adventures we have had so far, while adding as much of the history of the boat as we could find. The website began as a place to put all the information we had gathered into one central location as a reference tool. As time went on, it began to grow and evolve into what you see today. There are now photo and video galleries from all eras of the team, facts and race results, stories, and of course, restoration updates.

One of the features I wanted to include on the website was a Q&A with former crewmembers from the team. Taking a 20-questions type approach, this section would be more or less about stories and



Warner Costin helped the effort by hauling the driver's cowling in his truck.

Gary Laws

experiences from those racing days. I decided that I should start with the original owner, Bob Steil, as my first interview. None of us had ever met Bob in person at this point, and I had only spoken to him on the phone a couple times.

As Bob and I discussed the idea, he suggested that we bring everyone back together in a formal event so that everyone could share their experiences all at the same time in one place. This is where the idea for a Squire Shop Reunion Event was first introduced, and the task of tracking everyone down began soon afterwards.

The reunion event kept getting pushed out further in the year for various reasons. We realized we wouldn't be able to host the event until sometime during the fall, so we decided to bring the boat out one final time to Seafair, again in its "as is" condition. The only difference this time was we would attach the cowling we recovered from Lake Washington as a throwback reference to the hull's original configuration.

Bob Steil and former *Squire Shop* crewmember Don Beyer stopped by to see the boat this time, and Bob ended up staying most of the day with us. It was a blast, and I know Bob enjoyed himself as well. We spent the whole day hanging out. We even asked him to stay for dinner. Bob hadn't been to Seafair in many years, so it was great for him to see some of his old friends. Our relationship blossomed after that, and we're all pretty good friends and partners now. I wouldn't be surprised if he stopped by again this year, as we really enjoyed his company.

As the event was quickly approaching in October, Edwin



Hydroplane and Raceboat Museum

Bob Steil sold the hull to Jim Grader and it returned in 1985 as the U-33.

and I visited Bob at his house in Bellevue. Bob had a container of over 1,000 vintage negatives and slides from the racing team that he wanted us to have scanned and transferred to digital form. The museum folks were kind enough to do this tedious task for us, and we used a few of them for the slide-show presentation at the event.

We were fortunate enough to find a treasure trove of original pictures from the 1979 hull's initial construction, as well. These will go a long way towards providing key information on the restoration, as most of the original drawings by Dave Knowlen have been lost to history.

The reunion event was a huge success and most of the crewmembers from all eras of the team attended. It was at this event that we donated the hull to the museum and formally announced the restoration plans. It was always our intention and plan to donate the boat, but we wanted to remain involved with the project in various roles and capacities. As for the restoration team itself, I am taking on the role of team manager, and Tim Ramsay (*Atlas Van Lines*, *Miss Budweiser*, etc.) has proudly agreed to serve as crew chief.

## The Moment of Truth

The one thing most people don't realize is that when the 1979 *The Squire Shop* hull was retired in 1992, it was a very seasoned race boat at the time. The boat had survived a horrific crash in 1981, which essentially broke the boat in half. Bob Steil then purchased the former 1979 *Circus Circus* to replace the damaged boat (a virtual clone of the *Squire*) and continued racing it under *The Squire Shop* banner until 1983.

Jim Grader purchased the broken hull from Bob Steil, rebuilt it, and it returned to racing in 1985 as the U-33. The boat was never as competitive or successful as it was prior to the crash, but the fact that it ever raced again was an accomplishment in itself. So, ever since 1992, the hull has remained stored outside and exposed to the extremely harsh Washington state elements. Budd Green and "Cowboy" Bob Jensen bought the hull from Jerry Hopp and had plans to squeeze another season or two out of the old hull. Unfortunately for them, those plans never materialized.

It wasn't until 2012 that the hull was purchased by Jim Dickinson, only to come into our possession a



Don Mock



Hootens

The old *Squire Shop* hull continued to race until 1992 using a wide variety of names. [Top] The boat competed in 1987 as the *Jackpot Food Mart*. [Above] In 1992, it raced in Detroit as the *Miss Sundek*.

year later. But, by then, the weather had taken its toll on the then 34-year-old hull. The running joke in our family is that we didn't buy a hydroplane; we bought a trailer that happened to have a race boat still on it. We always figured if the boat was deemed a total loss, we could always resell the trailer and recoup some of our losses. We did our best to preserve what we inherited in terms of the hull's condition, but we knew the hull was in rough shape when we got it.

The decision was eventually made to bring the hull into the museum's workshop and start removing the deck. Judgment Day had finally arrived. We would actually see what we had (or didn't have) to work with. I, Tim Ramsay, Steve Compton, and a few others began removing the deck. What we saw on our initial observations in

terms of the hull's condition inside was surprisingly better than we expected going in. By the time we were finished, we had stripped most of the deck off the hull. But, make

no mistake about it, the hull has definitely seen better days.

In the weeks that followed, the team has now stripped the boat down to only the engine stringers and hull bottom. The sponsons (which were by far in the worst shape), cockpit, canards, battens, and non-trips were removed and will all be scrapped. All of the exterior aluminum is corroded beyond salvage, but we can still repair, rebuild, and reuse the internal pieces.

Remember, going in we only had one-half of the boat to salvage that was possibly still original, due to the dramatic modifications over the hull's racing career. Basically, everything from the front of the engine forward would be scrapped, regardless of condition. As for the remaining section, we will save what wood components and hardware we can, refurbish them, and reuse them once we start putting the boat back together.

We are nearly finished dismantling the hull and we will begin rebuilding soon. Steve is



Gary Laws

The hull arrives at the shop in the Hydroplane & Raceboat Museum for restoration.

currently securing the wood we will need to move forward, courtesy of his company, Compton Lumber.

Fans who have been following the project online are regularly asking if there will be anything left to save? My only answer to that question is that we will do EVERYTHING we can to preserve as much as possible. When we get finished, it will be virtually a brand-new boat. But, this project is no different than the 1980 *Miss Budweiser* and 1982 *Atlas Van Lines* restorations. They were nearly completely stripped down as well.

The museum also has Bob Steil's 1979 *Circus Circus* to use as a reference and parts, which is also being stored at the museum for easy access. Between the two boats, we will make the absolute best *Squire Shop* restoration possible. I promise you that.

Our timeline to restore the hull to running condition is two to three years, but we're hoping we can better that estimate as we progress. Dave Williams and Tim Ramsay are doing a fantastic job on keeping the project moving on and/or ahead of schedule. Steve Compton, Don Mock, Bryan Zimelman, and a few others are consistent volunteers on the team.

Everyone involved is highly motivated, passionate, and dedicated as well. This project is truly a team-driven effort. Original designer, Dave Knowlen, and builder, Norm Berg, have agreed to lend their knowledge and experience as consultants to ensure we meet the high-quality standards of the initial build.

We welcome and encourage anyone who is interested in helping out in the restoration to drop by the museum on Tuesdays, Thursdays,



Gary Laws



Parke Schneider

[Top] Author Gary Laws as he begins to remove the decking of *The Squire Shop*.  
[Above] Don Mock pressure cleaning the exposed hull after the decking was gone.

and on Saturdays. No experience is required, but helpful. No worries, we will train you.

I would like to thank everyone who has helped out on this project in any capacity. Without each and every one of you, this project would have never progressed this far. To show my appreciation, I saved one of the sponson deck pieces for the restoration crew to sign as a small token of our gratitude. It is currently hanging on the wall in the museum and is a tribute for everyone's dedication and sacrifices to help restore this legend back to its former glory.

This entire journey has been a rewarding and overwhelmingly successful experience so far. We're really just getting started. Now, the real fun begins. We have made many new friends along the way, as well as enhanced and strengthened the ones we already had. But, we can't do it alone. We need your help to continue on a path we started three years ago. And, as Bob Steil would likely say, U-2 can help us recreate history.

Thank you, the best is yet to come.

For more information go to: <http://79squireshop.weebly.com>

# Unlimiteds Unanimous loses a dear friend.

As I write this, I've just returned from dinner after the December Unlimiteds Unanimous (UU) and Unlimited NewsJournal (UNJ) editorial meetings. Kirk Pagel scheduled the meetings at the Bellevue Public Library, part of his duties as the UU vice president. We went through the agendas and made decisions about the January UNJ issue, but the mood was somber and reflective; Kirk Pagel was on all of our minds.



Kirk Pagel, 70, had passed away only three days before, on Thursday, December 8, 2016, likely of a heart attack. Kirk's interest in hydroplanes started from growing up on Mercer Island, which borders one side of the Lake Washington racecourse in Seattle. Hydros were immensely popular in his youth. Kirk was a hydro super fan and walked the talk. He was a past Seafair Boat Club commodore, the group that is instrumental in supporting the Seattle hydroplane race each year. For many years, he worked on the credentials committee for the Seattle race and was proud that he was able to help many teams, sponsors and officials successfully resolve credential issues that cropped up.

He was active in the Royal Order of the Turbine (ROTT), the club of hydro fans that meets for dinner to raise money for the Hydroplane and Race Boat Museum (HARM). They meet in Tri-Cities annually during race weekend and also meet in Seattle each winter for dinner. He originated the fun National Enquirer front page parody with hydro fans in it, which is circulated at the Tri-Cities ROTT meeting. For years he owned and raced Electric Radio

Controlled Unlimited (ERCU) hydroplanes, most recently the 1972 Atlas Van Lines 1/10-scale boat.

Kirk has been a UU officer and special projects editor or contributor to the UNJ for decades. For many years he was the Leland team expert. He'd stop over at the Leland shop and chat with Fred Leland once or twice a month and was one of the few people that could tell the Leland boats apart when sometimes some of Leland's boats shared identical paint schemes. He wrote special pieces for the UNJ, like the 50 Years Ago pieces, and officiated over UU meetings when the president was not available.

Each month, many UU members go to dinner after the UU/UNJ meetings and Kirk almost always joined the group. We all talk about topics ranging from hydro history, movies, Seattle sports, food and politics. Kirk had an amazing historical collection of hydroplane photos and knew hydroplane history, enjoyed going to the movies, loved good food—especially French onion soup—and was a Seahawk fan.

While Kirk's politics were generally on the Democrat side, he respected those with differing views. UU members agreed that he was a true gentleman. One UU member remarked that Kirk had mentioned that while serving as an Army MP in Vietnam, he had seen his share of bad things and made the deliberate decision that he would be positive and kind when he returned stateside.

Kirk retired from PEMCO Insurance a few years ago. He was divorced and is survived by his siblings and many, many friends. He was a Methodist and may the peace of the Lord be with him.

Chris Tracy, President of Unlimiteds Unanimous



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## NEXT MEETING OF UNLIMITEDS UNANIMOUS

**Sunday, January 8, 2017**  
**Meeting starts at 2 p.m.**

Kirkland Public Library  
308 Kirkland Avenue  
Kirkland, Washington 98033

**YOU ARE WELCOME TO ATTEND!**