



My Career in Hydroplane Racing 1953 through 2012

by Brooks Hanford

In the fall of 1951 my father and I were in a machine shop in Eastern Washington. The shop owner told my father that there was going to be a boat race in Seattle next summer that he should take me to. He said "I know he would be thrilled to watch those hydroplanes, and you would be too". That gentleman's name was Les Scoles.

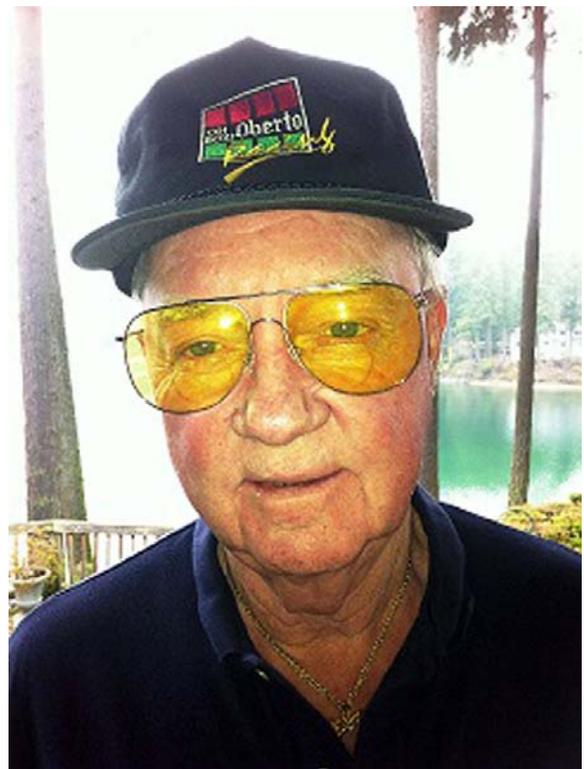
The three of us got tickets on the *Virginia V* cruise boat and came to the races in Seattle. On the way Dad ask how Les became so knowledgeable about these boats. He told us about being a crew member on the "Miss America" boats before the war. It was several years before I would fully understand the significance of that statement.

We stayed with an aunt who lived in West Seattle. The husband of one of her daughters was involved with the race team as an electrician. I asked him if he could get me into the pits for the 1953 race and he said he could. I was hooked.

In 1953 we raced out of the Mount Baker swim area. The Hydro's were parked along Lake Washington Boulevard until it was their turn to run. They were then towed up the boulevard and were lifted by crane into the parking lot. Those were military engines and required marine batteries. My Badge said I was an Electrician. It also said I was Ed Hanford. I wasn't old enough to work there so we used my father's name. I carried the boat batteries back and forth from the charging rack. The boats were then lifted into the Lake and did their thing. In the spring of 1954 I learned to fly with a young man from Seattle by the name of Green. That young man's father was Alan P. Green, Budget Chairman of the Gold Cup Committee. In 1955 He said "You should come to the races in Seattle this summer. I've got this great job in a Patrol Boat and I need a crew. I told him I was there in 1953 and would really like to come again. That was my only direct connection to the Waterside part of Seafair.

After graduation from college I moved to Seattle in 1961. The man who hired me at Boeing was Tom Winter, long time Timer and Scorer on the official barge. Clearly fate was on my side. He put me in touch with Skip Skinner and suggested I talk to him about the Pit Committee.

I called Skip and told him I really wanted a spot on his committee. He said he didn't have any openings next year but he'd make a note of me. In early 1963 I called back and he gave me an inter-



view. The Pit Committee was just 25 people and they literally ran the Pits. You only got a chance when they had an opening and you had to be approved after an interview with Skip. I made it

In 1964 they found that I could handle equipment and park trailers. I began parking the boats and fueling. At first we had a little flat bed "tug" powered by a Wisconsin V-4. We borrowed it from the National Guard to move everything around the pits. We didn't have forklifts at that time so we had to back all the trailers into the cranes.

Being one of the few "young men" on the Committee I was the one who managed the waste oil drums. In those days we waited until they were about $\frac{3}{4}$ full and then rolled them out to the fire lane where they could be disposed of. We also spent a lot of time sweeping and cleaning up around the boats. Above, Seattle pits in 1964. ~ Enid Brown photo

In about 1967 I started working with the Coast Guard on what is now known as the environmental impact of the oil and fuel. It wasn't nearly as important in those days as it has become now. It just made a mess and we started working on it. In the 1970's we in Seattle had a pretty good handle on it. At middle right, the Seattle pits in 1970. Rich Ombrek photo

From the comments and complaints we got from the crews, we were way ahead of most venues. "We don't have to do that at other races." was a common remark. Below, the pits at Sand Point in 1974. ~ H&RM Collection photos

In the early 1980's I had to give up on the waste oil and really heavy duty stuff, but I still led the team that cleaned it up. Also about this time I assumed the task of pulling all the hydro's for the Torch Light Parade. We had to have them all lined up on the Boulevard by 5 pm so they could get the Police escort to the parade. The fun came when they came back in the dark and we had to



park them back in their slots with a few area lights hanging from selected cranes. It was a great relief when the Torch Light Parade was moved to the week before the race. In all those years I never put a scratch on a hydro, trailer, or truck.



In 1994 I had back surgery and missed the race. In 1995 and 1996 I was back, but off the forklifts. In 1997 I was out for surgery again. I stayed active on the Environmental Committee and helped develop the position of Environmental Spotter. Because of my understanding of the pit response to accidents I assumed that position and continue to this day. When a hydro is running on the course I monitor it from the Pit Tower. If an accident occurs I coordinate the response of the Environmental Committee personnel who are spotted around the pit area. Above left the Seattle pits in 1995. ~ Rick Sullivan photo; At right the pits in 1996. ~ HARM Collection photo

In 2000 I started helping park the motor homes and trailers of the boat camps, officials and drivers in the cold pit area. This has become the "Pit Motor Home Placement Committee" and I continue to Chair this committee.

I now arrive at the pits on Sunday before the race and park these vehicles Monday through Thursday and then move to the Tower as the Environmental Spotter throughout the race weekend. I then tear it all down and get them out of the pits on Monday. We usually leave late Monday afternoon.

Over these many years I have had the opportunity to work with literally hundreds of dedicated drivers, crew, owners and volunteers. We constitute a very diverse group I have a ton of wonderful personal memories. As in any speed sport there are also a few very sad memories.

Fortunately they are greatly outnumbered by good times and good friends. I already take great pleasure in recounting these memories in the company of my current friends and associates in the sport. I really can't imagine not being involved in hydroplane racing.

I was a Charter Member of the Unlimited Hydroplane Museum and am currently a member of the Hydroplane and Race Boat Museum. The 2012 Seafair Race was my 50th race in Seattle. I turn 77 in October 2012. My goal is to last two more years. Then I can say I have worked a whole year racing unlimited hydroplanes. At right the south pit area at Seattle ~ Brooks Hanford photo. Actually I have already worked over a year if you count several years in the Tri-Cities.

My wife has also worked many years in the pits on various committees and currently is in charge of Hot Pit Credentials. Our daughter was in line to assume the



position of Landside Chair in 2011, but she passed away after the 2010 race. Our granddaughter was involved for many years and was chair of the Night Fueling Committee before going into the Navy. Our grandson is currently chair of that committee.

Our family has been honored “In recognition for three generations of dedication and commitment to the Seafair Boat Club and their activities”, and I was honored for “Outstanding Achievement” in 1999 with the Seafair Race Team. In 2007 I received the “Darryl Newsham” award for service. In 2012 I was named “Seafair



Landside Volunteer Of The Year Award For Outstanding Achievement And Service To The Sport Of Unlimited Hydroplane Racing”. At right the nort pit area at Seattle. Brooks hanford photo

I wish Les Scoles was still alive, I think he would be pleased.

Book Review: *BEST of Thunderboat Racing*

by *Stephen A. Garey*

Little-known facts and rip-roaring stories from the fascinating archives of the fastest race boats in the world

Author: Stephen A. Garey, Copyright 2014 by Stephen A. Gary

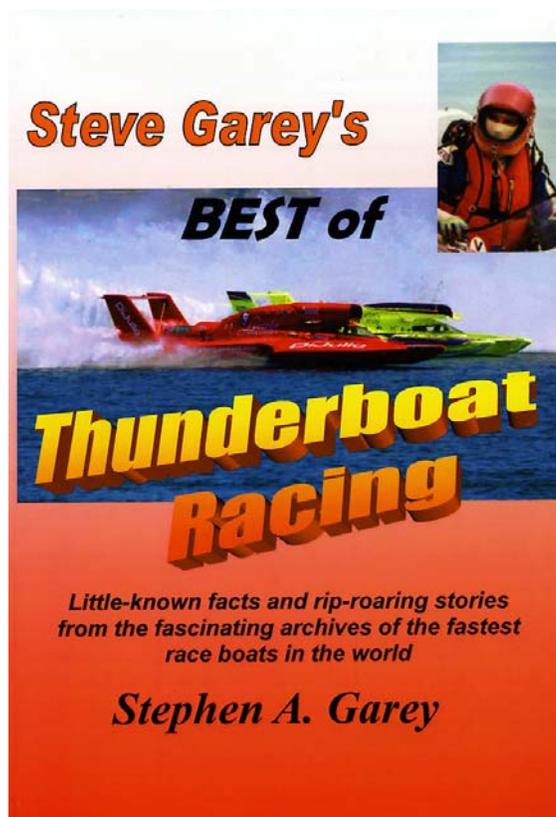
ISBN 978-0-692-22992-7

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Thunderboat Racing is author Steve Garey’s third book on the sport of Unlimited Hydroplane racing. The first two are: *Bill Muncey: Boat Racing Legend*, and the *Roar of the Hydros hydroplane racing’s first 100 years*

His third book is divided into five parts. The first part is: Legends in their own Time, covering names like Gar Wood, Count Theo Rossi, Horace Dodge Jr. Guy Lombardo, Stan Dollar Jack Schaffer and the Schoenith family. “Fearless” Fred Alter has 4 pages with great photos. Did you know that Horace Dodge’s mother, Anna Thompson Dodge at 92 years of age, out lived her son Horace Jr. who died at 63? It’s in the book!



Part two is Great Events and Special Race sites. Author Garey looks at the Lake Tahoe Races, The Las Vegas Sahara Cup, Racing in Sunny Florida and how Henry Segrave and Gar Wood made Miami a stop on Raceboat circuit. Madison and Pearl Harbor are both interesting stories

Part three is They Might Be Giants. Every champion driver in the modern era is covered here.

Part four is Racing in The 21st Century, featuring the drivers that have stood out since the advent of Y2K.

Part five is Records. Gold Cup, National Champions Silver Cup and UIM World Champions are all covered. If you're into statistics, this chapter is pure gold.

Steve Garey has written a book that is hard to put down, once you start reading it. And the photos help tell the story with some never before seen boat and people pictures. If you don't get this for Christmas, buy it for yourself !

163 pages, 375 b&w and color photos.

Review by Kirk Pagel, Special Projects Editor for the Unlimited NewsJournal



Above left, Lee Schoenith and Bill Stead at the 1954 Gold Cup in Seattle. ~ Kirk Pagel photo-At right Ted Jones stands between Mel and Chuck Hickling in 1959. ~ H&RM Collection photo-Bottom left, Chuck Thompson, Ron Musson, and Fred Alter on *Miss Bardahl* in 1965. ~ Tony Bugeja Collection photo-At right in back Mira Slovak and Terry Sterett in 1966. ~ Sandy Ross Collection photo.

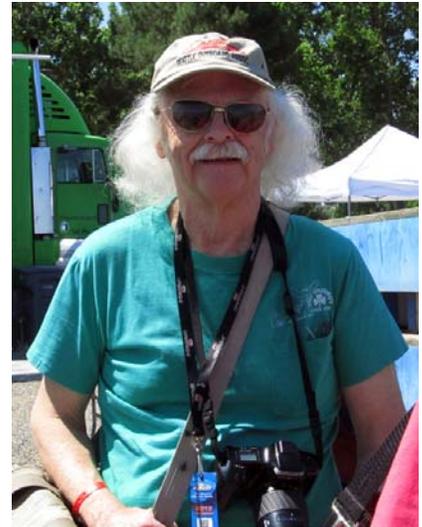


Lake Chelan Mahogany & Merlot

**From Craig Fjarlie
Lon Erickson photos**

For the last several years, the first weekend of October has been the time to head to Lake Chelan, Washington for a vintage hydroplane event. The Hydroplane & Raceboat Museum, local wine merchants, and a classic car organization converge on the central Washington town of Chelan for a time of fun and reminiscing. Vintage unlimited and limited inboard hydroplanes, and classic boats, take turns running on the lake.

The 2014 renewal featured six vintage unlimiteds and 13 vintage inboards. Replicas of *Miss Thriftway* and *Miss Wahoo* were joined by *Miss Bardahl* (3), *Miss Budweiser* (5), *Oh Boy! Oberto*, and *John Francis My Sweetie*. Saturday dawned cloudy and cool, but the lake water was calm. Participants were ready early.



Above left the U-60 *Miss Thriftway* on tilt. At right Dave Williams gives Greg Hopp a ride in the U-77 *Miss Wahoo*. Below tilt shots of the U-40 *Miss Bardahl* and U-12 *Miss Budweiser*.



John Goodman, owner of the 1967 *Miss Budweiser*, was unable to make the trip to Chelan. Jere Heiser took the boat out for a few laps, but that was the only time it ran. Museum Director David Williams took unlimited driver Greg Hopp for a ride in *Miss Wahoo*.

Mahogany & Merlot always attracts a number of unlimited owners, drivers, and crew members. Among those in attendance were Ed Cooper, John Walters, Mitch and Mark Evans, Mike and Lori Jones, Jesse Robertson, Jim Harvey, and Jim Lucero. Shortly before noon, Steve Compton took Lucero for a ride in *Miss Thriftway*. Lucero remarked that was the first time he had been for a boat ride since he tested the "Blue Blaster" *Atlas Van Lines* in 1977.



Dixon Smith and his son, Ryan, both drove *Miss Bardahl*. Ryan's stint behind the wheel marked the first time three generations of a family have driven a hydroplane powered by a Roll-Royce Merlin

engine.

Near the end of Saturday's activities, Alan McDonough took *Miss Wahoo* out and Rob Wheeler took *Oh Boy! Oberto* out. The two put on a fine exhibition "race" for three laps.

Sitting in the upper parking lot was a historic unlimited that attracted a great deal of interest. *John Francis My Sweetie*, an Allison-powered step hydro with a vee-drive gearbox, campaigned by Horace Dodge in 1954-55, gleamed in the afternoon sun as the cloud cover finally broke. Ken Muscatel assured the crowd of curious onlookers that the boat would run on Sunday. Late afternoon, *Miss Bardahl* and *Miss Thriftway* were pulled out of the pits. *John Francis My Sweetie* was moved into the space vacated by *Miss Bardahl*. As the change was taking place, Mark Schafhauser, of Spokane, flew over the lake in a restored Bucker Jugmann that was once owned by Mira Slovak.



Sunday dawned sunny and warm, the kind of weather one expects in Chelan in early October. Art and Larry Oberto, and GP West driver Brent Hall, were in the pits. Larry went for a ride with Josh Hyatt in the vintage *Oberto*. Larry later remarked that was his first boat ride since he flipped his D Stock Hydro in 1995. Several other people who had volunteered at the museum, or made large

donations, went for rides in *Miss Wahoo* and *Oberto*. Vintage inboards ran exhibition heats throughout the afternoon.

Shortly before 11:00, Ken Muscatel trailer fired the engine in *John Francis My Sweetie*. The engine was balky, but it finally roared to life. Next, the crane slings were attached and the boat was slowly lifted off its trailer. Ken Muscatel drove the boat first. Again, he had to work to get the engine to start, but when it finally did there was a sense of excitement throughout the pits as the historic craft moved away from the dock. Muscatel made two slow laps, never going much over 50 mph. Later in the day, Jay Leckrone and Glenn Raymond each took *John Francis* out for a couple of laps, but neither went appreciably faster than Muscatel did on the initial run. Below left the bottom of John Francis. At right the U-17 at dock. ~ Craig Fjarlie photos



Activity concluded mid-afternoon. Boats went on tilt on their trailers and started the trek for home. Concession booths were taken down and vintage cars moved out of the parking lot. Only the beer garden stayed open until late afternoon.



Mahogany & Merlot is now a vital part of Chelan's annual activities. It is listed in civic promotion brochures and draws a good crowd of spectators; some older residents remember attending the Apple Cup races in the 1950s. In early October, leaves in the surrounding hills have started turning to fall colors making Mahogany & Merlot a great cap on summer fun.

More Shots from Chelan's Mahogany & Merlot



Beside Ken Muscatel driving the U-17, above left is Jay Leckrone driving *My Sweetie John Francis* and on right, Glenn Raymond behind the wheel. The *My Sweetie John Francis* only ran Sunday. ~ Craig Fjarlie photos-Below left Ken Muscatel in the cockpit of *My Sweetie*. At right drivers Jesse Robertson and



Mark Evans were on hand to watch for the event ~ Craig Fjarlie photos. Belowleft, *Miss Thriftway* and *Oh Boy! Oberto* returns to the dock after a run on Lake Chelan. At right *Miss Wahoo* takes off as *Miss Bardahl* and *Miss Budweiser* return. ~ Lon Erickson photos





HydroFile
Lon Erickson

17) Our Gang Racing

As we reported last month, the OGR hull and equipment is all up for sale. On recent crew nights, **Nate Brown** and the team are in the process of inventorying equipment, and working on putting together a formal advertisement listing the sale. For more specifics on the sale, contact Nate through the Our Gang Racing website.



21) Go Fast Turn Left Racing

Checking in with **Brian Perkins** from the O'Farrell team, here's an update on what's new in that camp. With the #21 damaged hull, from a 2014 Tri-Cities accident, and a new "yet to be completed" hull both in the shop, some assessments and decisions had to be made. The O'Farrell's, their team, along with **Jim Harvey, Ron Jones, Jr. and Dale Van Wierengen** took a close look at both hulls and made the decision the current #21 hull was in a better position to be rebuilt, and be a viable race boat sooner than the unfinished new hull.

Both the #21 hull and the new boat have had work done on them, with Jim Harvey & Ron Jones Jr. working on the rebuild of the 21, while Dale Van Wierengen's attention has been on the new hull,



Above left the wrecked U-21 being pulled out of Columbia. ~ Karl Pearson-At right the wreck in the shop. On bottom the new U-21 in shop in March of 2012. ~ GFTL Racing photos



including deck work. The new hull is in the basic framework configuration with no hardware, components, or systems in the boat at this stage.

The #21 had the damaged canoes cut off, front spar, and major parts of the bottom of the boat removed. These are all in the process of being either rebuilt or replaced. The big advantage to rebuilding the 21 is the safety capsule, major systems are all intact, alignments are already known, the hardware is good, and these factors are critical in completing a rebuild or any new hull.

The primary focus is on the #21 hull but both hulls are currently being worked on during regular crew nights at the shop. Plans for the 2015 do include running the full H1 circuit with the 21 hull, however they have not ruled out the possibility of seeing the new hull next year. As is customary at this point of the off-season, sponsorship's are being worked on for 2015 but not confirmed. Brian Perkins will be driving the GFTL hull in 2015 and as in 2014, Jamie Nilsen could also be a part of that driving team again. 2015 driving duties are not completely confirmed at this stage.

U-57) Mark Evans:

Recent remarks from Mark Evans on his stable of boats in Lake Chelan. "Hydroplanes For Sale or Rent"..! I Double Dog Dare anybody to put big V-8 engines in an Unlimited Hydroplane..! Go Piston Power..! ~ Evans facebook photos



Mark currently has the former U-57 FEDCO hull #9010, the former Leland Miss Thriftway, #9810, that was being converted to auto-power by Fred Leland before his passing and was also recently used by Murdo Cameron to create a program for a mold-process of building unlimited hulls. Mark also has his 4-seater converted outboard powered hydroplane he sells rides in. This is hull #9698, another Leland hull best known as the 1997 flip & win *PICO American Dream* and 1998-'99 *Appian Jeronimo*.

Here are some examples of the new "flat rack" system in place in Doha, compliments of Peters & May Racing. A shot of the three boats that used the system on the cornice pit area, the U-12 *Miss DiJulio*, gbr-11 *Peters & May*, and the U-100 *Tony Romas/Sahara Pizza*. The first container ship returning with these three boats is expected back to the U.S. in early January. The other seven boats will return on the Ro-Ro type ship but that process involves a longer timeframe, the scheduled date for that vessel is not known at this stage. ! Peters & May Racing photo



H&RM News - The 1973 *Pay 'n Pak* (#7325) restoration has moved into full gear at the Hydroplane and Raceboat Museum. They recently had a formal volunteer meeting to get the restoration crew process underway. The goal is to have the Pak done for next summer on Lake Washington. Below left is the new U-25 *Pay'n Pak* on tilt in 1973. ~ H&RM Collection photo - At right, the *Pay 'n Pak* dressed as the 1988 U-6 *Holset Miss Madison* on tilt in the parking lot at Hydroplane and Raceboat Museum in 2012. ~ Karl Pearson photo



Here are a some shots of the the former *Pay'n Pak*/*Miss Holset Miss Madison* being worked on in the shop at the Hydroplane and Raceboat Museum. ~ Lon Erickson photos



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NEXT MONTH: 2014 Qatar Race Report

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Next Meeting of Unlimiteds Unanimous

**Shoreline Public Library
345 NE 175th Steet
Shoreline, WA**

-everyone welcome!-

**Sunday December 14th
UNJ 2 pm -- 4:30pm**

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