



## Goodman to step away from sport



Chris Denslow

Miss Goodman Real Estate arrives in the pit area before last year's annual preseason testing session at the Tri-Cities.

**T**he company that has sponsored the winner of the last two national titles will step away from H1 Unlimited racing for the 2026 season. Company officials explained they made the decision so they could focus on a major shift in its business growth. Bruce Ratchford, owner of the BWR Racing team, issued a press release on February 15 to thank John Goodman and the entire Goodman Real

Estate organization for their sponsorship and support for his race team last season.

Goodman Real Estate began sponsoring hydroplanes operated by Miss Madison, Inc., in 2021. The company became the sponsor of the team's older hull in 2023, when Andrew Tate drove *Miss Goodman Real Estate* to second-place finishes at Guntersville, Alabama, and at the Gold Cup in Seattle. When HomeStreet Bank dropped its sponsorship of

the team's primary boat after the 2023 season, Goodman put its name on that boat in 2024 and won two races and the national title with Tate driving

Ratchford, the founder and CEO of Apollo Mechanical, a sheet metal contracting company based in Kennewick, Washington, purchased the Madison race team late in 2024 and, with Tate continuing as driver, campaigned the U-91 boat to victories at Madison and

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Seattle and to a second-straight national title. The boat was also the fastest qualifier at every event last season.

Ratchford's BWR Racing team also operated two other boats last season. Dave Villwock drove the U-27 *Miss Apollo* at Gunter'sville but the boat was involved in an accident that took it out of competition for the remainder of the 2025 campaign. That boat was replaced by another *Miss Apollo* that won last year's Gold Cup in the Tri-Cities. That hydroplane was the same boat that first carried the Goodman sponsorship and is also one of the most successful in the sport's history, having won a total of 26 races and eight national titles.

"I just want to say, 'thank you' to Goodman Real Estate, John Goodman, and to Kelli Jo Norris and her team," Ratchford said. "They've been a great sponsor for us, very supportive, and we look forward to working with them in the future. I wish them luck with their business moves."

While the colors on the boat may change, Ratchford said that keeping the national championship-winning team intact is his first priority—even if that means entering the season without a title sponsor.

"At this point I'm not really just out there searching for a sponsor," he said. "I want our team and continuity to stay together. I want to promote BWR racing, and Apollo as our sponsor."

According to the team's press release, as Ratchford and BWR begin their second season of competition in the H1 Unlimited circuit, he has a lot of irons in the fire as he transitions into a seasoned racing team and prepares to defend the U-91 team's national championship run of last season. The team is keeping busy with winter projects, from merchandise to a new website to fleet maintenance.

Under the guidance of crew chief Mike Hanson and of Taylor Evans, the crew chief of the U-27, work is progressing in the team's shop in Tukwila, Washington, to prepare all three boats

for competition. The expectation as of right now is that Andrew Tate will be in the driver's seat of the same hull that he drove to the last two national championships. The boat will campaign as the U-1 *BWR Racing*, unless another sponsorship develops.

Decisions about what boat will be used as the U-27 *Miss Apollo* will be a little bit more flexible and will have a lot

to do with the preferences of the team's new driver, Jimmy Shane. Shane has won 12 races and four national titles while driving the hydroplane that raced most of last season as *Miss Apollo*.

The team has also repaired the hull that was damaged at Gunter'sville and plans to bring it, and its other two boats, to the testing opportunity at the Tri-Cities on May 30. ❖

## What do you think?

### Comments from our readers

I have often wondered what happened to Brenda Jones over the years but thanks to your story in this month's UNJ. I now know. It seems to me that there will be six boats (8, 9, 11, 12, 27, and 91) who will be full-time participants on the 2026 circuit. Add that to the part-time participants (6, 21, and 40) and you have a decent number of hulls lined up. One can always hope that something happens with the permanently beached hulls (2, 7, and 37) and I have an extreme round of optimism going forward.

And as any Unlimited fan can tell you, the number of race sites and number of hulls showing up are the two biggest questions heading into each season. So, what is going on with Decatur, Illinois, now? As you said it seems that their race has kind of slipped into the twilight zone. I realize that the official schedule has yet to be announced, but I know that H1 has been looking for a substitute for Gunter'sville for a while now. Decatur would be a perfect spot to be the first or second race of the circuit. I still can't figure out what the problems with San Diego are. It seems that they would have at least six or seven boats down there this year but it is always a question with that location.

What I would like to see this year is that Scott Raney gets a hold of a newer boat to run. He seems to enjoy his underdog status. His current boat is certainly a fan favorite but just doesn't have the speed to win a race in today's world.

Thanks for your time and for publishing the UNJ as it would be a long, cold winter waiting for H1 to publish something if it were not for you.

Rod Michalson

Hi Andy,

I read through the history of starting procedures in all its excruciating detail. It seems like they went back and forth almost every year, with predictable results. What drivers didn't like last year they won't like next year.

Only one of the solutions made sense to me: set the score-up line at the start/finish line, with enough time to make the final pre-race lap at a decent speed. Then all the maneuvering and trolling will come before the one-minute gun, and real speed can be achieved. It will look good, and there's not much speedy racing before then anyway. Up till that last pre-race lap it will just seem like boats warming up. The fans (especially if they come back next year) will understand.

My nickel (since there's no more pennies),

Roger Lippman

Greetings Andrew,

Thanks for your most recent issue of UNJ. Your excellent summary of the background on various methods tried over the years for the start of racing was really helpful.

I know I'm probably considered old fashioned, but I remember when it was legendary to have the giant starting clock visible to the fans on the shore, as well as those watching on TV. There was something exciting and suspenseful about watching that big old clock winding down. After the one-minute gun, there always seemed to be a sense of urgency on the racecourse, and you could sense the stirring in the crowd as well, people got to their feet. Bring something like that back to the sport! I hear too much whining by the drivers quite frankly—it should be more about the fans. Players in other sports don't dictate the rules of the game, too bad if the drivers don't like this or that start procedure—what do the fans want? We need to get more from that perspective, as long as safety is not compromised.

Ron Suttell

**FROM THE UNJ VAULT:**

# A conversation with Steve Reynolds, Part 3

The past two issues of the *NewsJournal* have included the first segments of a four-part series of interviews with Steve Reynolds, one of the most popular hydroplane drivers in the late 1970s and early '80s. In parts one and two, Reynolds talked about his career driving *Miss Circus Circus* in 1979 and 1980. The story continues this month with his experience driving *Captran Resorts*, *Miss Prodelco*, and others in 1981.

Born in Oakland, California, the handsome, thoughtful, and outgoing Reynolds became enamored with hydroplanes while growing up on Mercer Island, served with the Marine Corps in Vietnam, and, after attending Long Beach State in California, moved back to the Seattle area and got involved in limited-class inboard racing. That led to his first Unlimited ride aboard *Miss Circus Circus* in 1978.

Always a good interview subject for reporters and a polished public speaker for his sponsor and for the sport, Reynolds soon became a fan and media favorite. As we learned last month, however, his career with *Circus Circus* came to an unhappy end after a 1980 season that included frustrating efforts to get a positive performance out of the team's experimental four-point boat.

The interview was conducted by Craig Fjarlie in 1992 and was originally published in the September, October, and December 1992 issues of the *Unlimited NewsJournal*.

**UNJ: Well, [in 1981] you drove the *Captran* at Seafair.**

Reynolds: Yeah, wasn't that fun! I hadn't planned to do any racing. Ron Giese and Tracy Bratvold are good friends of mine, and in taking the gear off, I'd turned down a couple offers to drive boats because they weren't competitive.

I wanted something I could go out and compete with. If I couldn't compete, then I'd just as soon stay and build boats with Ron Jones. But Ron Giese had been a friend of mine for 10



Sam Cole

years, and Tracy and I worked at Circus Circus and had known each other for five years before then.

Tracy asked me, said, “I need help.”

I said, “Sure, if I can help you I will.”

So, we had fun that day. But it was extremely hot, and I hadn’t driven anything except a couple of limited boats in the last year, so I don’t think that I was physically prepared for it. The rudder did not have much lead in it. Anywhere from over 120 miles an hour, it would take 80 or 90 pounds of strength to hold it in a straight line. At 150, I’d imagine it was taking 120 to 150 pounds of strength.

Then it got to where I couldn’t hold it in a straight line. So, I’d have to back off of it. And I had a lot of right rudder at the time. I was straining the engines and it was hard to drive. Couldn’t go over 150 or so miles an hour. I had more power, I just couldn’t keep it in a straight line. We had a three-blade on there, it was torquing the transom around. It was a very physical day.

**Were there any similarities between that boat and the first Circus Circus?**

Circus was easier to drive.

**They were both Ron Jones boats, approximately the same vintage.**

They were built a year apart, but the boat that ran as the *Captran*—Ron made quite a different change to the bottom



Steve Reynolds's only appearance in 1981 was driving *Captran Resorts* at the Gold Cup.

of that boat than he did to the one that’s running as the *Gilmore* now. The break in the bottom was much farther forward; it was almost a midships break.

Schumacher liked to have that boat, glued down on the water, so running it the way they had it set up when they ran as *Olympia Beer*, it’s a very secure ride—very, very secure ride. And I did enjoy that. I got to the point where you learn how to drive a conventional. You’re not quite as tense, after you’ve been driving for a few years and the pressure isn’t quite the same. I guess they consider me a veteran now instead of just a rookie.

**Well, certainly.**

So, I’ve driven a couple of conven-

tional. But, the boat was easier to drive, much easier to drive. *Captran* was a very difficult boat to drive. To take a rookie, and an inexperienced rookie like Bobbie Howard, and put him in that boat... He’d driven a lot of boats but never accumulated any records and was not considered to be one of your harder drivers. I can see where Bobbie Howard had a tremendous amount of trouble driving the boat. Not counting the pressure that was put on him by doing it in front of so many talented men he was driving against. And one talented woman. That, coupled with the fact it was such a difficult physical boat to drive, I’m not surprised that Bob had trouble with it.

**The association with Captran didn’t last. It was only one race.**

You know, *Captran* kind of disappointed me a little bit. I drove for virtually nothing in Seattle, because they didn’t have much of a budget. So, I didn’t really expect any money out of ‘em. I was going to do it almost for free. They said, “Come on down to Miami, we’ll fly you down there first class, and we’ll put you and your wife up, and you can enjoy and understand what Captran Resorts is all about.”

They were looking to put me in some type of a sales or sales management spot. You know, they won the Seafair race and they’d gotten more press from one event than they’d gotten all year long. It was



Reynolds won two heats driving *Captran Resorts* during the 1981 Gold Cup in Seattle.

Tony Bugeja Collection

Sandy Ross Collection

the first time they'd seen positive press. They were very pleased with that.

**They'd only finished a few heats before then.**

Oh, yeah. And then, to be surrounded with as much controversy as they had, and Bobbie Howard saying if the boat'll do over 105, I'll eat it, and I did a lap of 112, another one of 109... Ahh, well. They worked me every day. I worked a big annual banquet for them—spoke at that. I spoke at a Lion's Club, a Rotary Club luncheon, they introduced me to all the employees.

I mean they worked the hell out of me for three days down there. Finally, I told them I was leaving and going back home. So, I wasn't interested in driving for *Captran*. I like Keith Trowbridge and his wife very much. They're really nice people. It's just that I could see from the start they were trying to get as much exposure... Their motives were not to be a national champion. They were just there to get as much publicity as possible, and I wasn't interested in that program.

**Well, to move on the present season—Miss Prodelco...**

Well, I'd been working at Ron Jones' for about a year...

**You worked on the boat the year before?**

Oh yeah. When I was working for Ron, I helped put the sponsions on, I put the steering system in it. When I started out, I was working for Ken Thompson.

Ken said, "I've got my boat in Ron's shop. Would you go in and see if you can speed it along a little bit?" So, I went in and cut out all the frames for the sponsions. We were going to send the boat

back over to Pasco, and Kerth was going to do the remainder of the work.

Ron had partners named Roland Ramsey, and Diana Pratt. They became limited partners of Ron's. They're very close friends. Roland is an independent businessman from California, and Diana Pratt is his girlfriend. She lived in Olympia and knew Ron and Bev very well. Roland asked me if I would go in working for him, maybe streamline production. So, I did a lot of work on that boat when it was in there.

**Put back to the cabover configuration?**

Put it back to the cabover. We did send it back over to Pasco without a deck on it. Kerth put the deck on it, he glossed it, painted it, and did everything else. So, I pretty much knew the boat.

However, when John (Still) bought it, it was in very bad shape. Now, John bought it "race ready." The hull itself needed about \$20,000 worth of work on it to make it seaworthy. What had happened was, when they put the deck on top of the battens—about a half an inch thick and the decking is about a quarter of an inch thick. Well, you glue it. Put it down, and then you either screw it or staple it down.

Well, Kerth stapled it down, but he used inch and a half staples. They went through the decking, through the deck battens, and then split the wood as they came out the back side. So, the deck, which actually gives the hull all of its integrity, was—when I walked around on it when we first got it over, here, I said, "That's the first thing that's gotta be done."

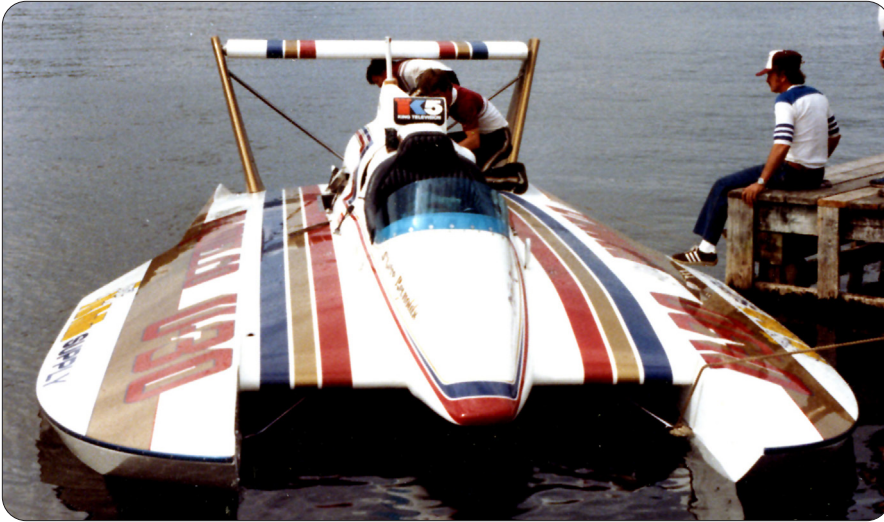
The deck had to be replaced. The cowling

**"They're really nice people. It's just that I could see from the start they were trying to get as much exposure... Their motives were not to be a national champion. They were just there to get as much publicity as possible, and I wasn't interested in that program."**

Steve Reynolds in the cockpit of *Miss Prodelco* during the 1982 Emerald Cup in Seattle.



Hydroplane and Raceboat Museum



Miss Prodelco at the dock in Seattle in 1982.

that they put on didn't fit straight. There were a number of broken frames inside the boat. The bottom—honeycomb was delaminated right around the shaft log and it was twisting. You could put a shaft up in there and move the shaft log. So, Ron did about \$20,000 worth of work to it, and we got into the engines and found out there were a lot of things we had to do there.

I went with John Still primarily because I was talking with the *Atlas Van Lines* people at the time, and they were talking to me about driving the *Atlas*. I've always been kind of an independent person who likes to have a little control over which direction I'm going. And working for an *Atlas Van Lines* team, I didn't think I'd have as much input in it as I would like to have. So, John, at the time, verbally offered me far more freedom than the *Atlas Van Lines* people could. So, rather than jump into a ready-made team, I wanted to develop one on my own. So, I went with John. Unfortunately, it didn't work out.

**You brought in Jerry Verheul.**

Yup.

**How did you feel he did over the course of the summer?**

I thought he did tremendous. If you only knew the amount of work that Jerry Verheul accomplished and the things that he had to do. He had a few ideas that

he wanted to incorporate on his own. But the farther we got into the engines—one crew chief has one way of building engines—Jerry Verheul has been building engines since he was two I think. He knows the internal workings of a piston engine, regardless if it's a Merlin, a Griffon, or a Chrysler or a Chevrolet, it doesn't matter. The pistons go up and down, they are things that you just learn by being a mechanic on an engine. Jerry has been doing it, and very successfully, for a lot of years.

We were short on money. And we were short on equipment. We did not have a lot of good equipment. We had enough to maybe put together four engines. Some of those were even doubtful. We did not have one carburetor that worked. We didn't find out until after we bought the equipment that the Tri-City people never ran their own carburetors, they always had to borrow one. So, we had three carburetors, none of which worked.

**You were running front ends from Atlas.**

Oh, sure. We borrowed carburetors from *Atlas*; we borrowed one from *Squire*; the only time the boat would ever run is when we had somebody else's carburetor on it. Most of the systems inside the boat—we just did not have enough time or enough money—it cost us a lot

of money just to get the equipment to a point where...

**In preseason testing you had some real handling problems.**

Oh, it was miserable. We thought we had gear ratios that we didn't have. We thought the boat weighed about 12–15 hundred pounds less than it wound up weighing. We were under the impression that it weighed under 6,000 pounds. We ordered propellers accordingly. So, we weighed the boat, it was over 7,000, not under 6,000. We bought propellers for an under-6,000-pound boat.

**Why would they buy the equipment before they weighed the boat?**

It was my suggestion that John Still not buy it. I did not want him to buy it. Number one, I thought it was overpriced. Far overpriced. But at the time, John was thinking about shooting a motion picture. He wanted to—in a very generous effort on his part—he really was giving up his entire production company's profits to those in Unlimited racing that wanted to take advantage of it.

What he was asking, is, if you buy one point of the 10 points that the production company would receive in the way of profits, one point is \$225,000, you had the potential, if he could bring it in at a budget of \$2 million, you could have made "X" number of dollars back. But, he didn't feel he would have any strength or any support going in if he didn't have racing equipment running. My suggestion was buying new equipment, you'll make the second half of the racing season, and you'll be far better ahead than you are now.

But he wanted to buy equipment and have it ready, so when he went down to Miami to make this pitch to the Unlimited people, that he already had equipment. He was showing his sincerity and his honesty. But he paid much more than it was worth. Had to put a lot of money into it that he didn't plan on putting into it. The way that we set the boat up and ran it, it was not competitive for the first couple of races. We did make chang-

es to it. We did run different propellers, changed the skid fin.

Actually, when we qualified in Seattle here at 131 miles an hour, it was a very easy 131. The boat had never gone any faster than 126 before. I think that we could have squeezed out 133 or 4 if we'd had to. I did that 131 without any use of nitrous oxide. So, I thought that, faced with the financial problems that we had, with the limited equipment that we had, that Verheul did an exceptional job on it. And Dan Walters and Mike Campbell both worked 15 to 18 hours a day, six and seven days a week, for three months. Things that we normally would have subcontracted out, we did ourselves.

We glassed the deck, we put the cowling on, we painted the boat, we painted and fixed the trailer, we rebuilt all of the engines, took 'em all the way down and rebuilt 'em. We put an awful lot of time into it, and we were tired when the season got started. John Still did not receive the kind of enthusiasm from the people that he reps that he thought he would over the boat. He was going on speculation that a number of these people would be so excited about an Unlimited hydroplane that they'd be willing to get involved financially, which did not take place.

**Now, this is who?**

People that John's aerospace com-



Reynolds drives *Miss Prodelco* onto the Detroit River for the 1982 Gold Cup.

Hydroplane and Raceboat Museum

pany sells for—represents. He felt, in talking to them, bringing them out here, giving them some pictures of the boat, they were all enthusiastic about it. When it came down to investing money into it, they didn't want to do that. Then the aircraft industry really took a dive, and that hurt John financially. So, it came to the point, when we got back from the East Coast, we were really short on equipment.

We were short on money. We shut the operation down. Jerry and I both wanted to race in Pasco and Seattle. So, Verheul went out and got a sponsor, the *Mr. Auto*. It's one connection he had. We made a deal with John; we'll get you this much money to run Pasco and Seattle. Let's at least run these two races in our home town. But it still came down to

having problems with money.

**How did you feel the boat handled? It has always appeared to have a lot of straightaway speed—fast.**

It did. In Detroit, we couldn't turn. We didn't have the right gear ratios, but we were stuck with what we had. In Detroit, I passed both the *Atlas* and the *Budweiser* going down the front straightaway.

In Madison, for instance, we were the sixth boat so we had to be last boat across the line. I was third going into the corner and passed the *Budweiser* on the straightaway before the blower let go. We would easily have won that race. Far faster than *Squire Shop*. *Budweiser* lost a propeller blade. That was the first time the boat had ever been hooked up and running well. I couldn't believe it coming out of the corner when I hit the nitrous oxide button and it took off, and I passed the *Budweiser* halfway down the straightaway. I was closing very rapidly on the *Squire Shop*.

**Did you notice many differences between that boat and the *Circus*?**

Yeah, quite a bit. I think the biggest difference was, this boat actually was not as physical to drive, as the *Circus*. The *Circus* was a very physical boat to muscle around the racecourse. It did a lot of bouncing, had short, stubby sponsons on it, and it was a rough-riding boat. It had a tendency to take off and fly on you at any time. Really get loose and get out of the water.

But if you drove it, if you dominat-



Reynolds took a spin at the wheel of *Miss Kentuckiana Paving* when in Detroit in 1982. The boat is shown here parked next to *Miss Prodelco* in the Detroit pits.

Sandy Ross Collection



Reynolds wrapped up the 1982 campaign driving *Gilmore Special* at San Diego and in Houston.

ed the hull, if you just stayed with it and kept a lot of power into it, and physically overpowered whatever characteristics it was trying to display—go backward or spin out or whatever—I communicated pretty well with the boat. But this particular boat, the *Prodelco*, the Ron Jones boat, was very easy to drive.

When we finally got the engine to where it would produce power by borrowing somebody else's carburetor, and we could put power to the propeller—we did change the skid fin—the boat was very easy to drive. It turned very well. I could put it anywhere I wanted.

We relayed that information back to Ron Jones, and he was very pleased about it. Here was an eight year old boat, he modified the sponsons, moved the shaft back a little bit, and I thought we were getting a more stable ride than anybody else that was running that kind of speeds. It cornered very well. We still had the weight problem to fight. In fact, we were running engines that *Notre Dame* had in the 60's. They had gone through *Notre Dame*, *Weisfield's*, *Olympia*, *Budweiser*, *Thousand Trails*, and then we got it. It was awfully tired.

But I felt it was an easier boat to handle. I could virtually put it anywhere I wanted to put it. I was just restricted—it wouldn't accelerate real quick because of all the weight. If it did, I had to strain the

engine so badly, that I wasn't sure I could accelerate that hard off of more than two or three corners without breaking something. So, it really had an effect on how I had to drive the boat.

In Evansville, we wanted to go home. The crew wanted to go home because we didn't have any equipment and we weren't competitive. We were down to one engine. John wanted to go and compete there anyway. So, we detuned the engine considerably. We backed the timing way off. We didn't put any  $Cl_2$  in the fuel. We didn't run any nitrous. The boat would maybe do 140 or 145 miles an hour. We were there just to finish, period.

We were running a smaller, two-bladed prop, which is much slower than a three, and a taller gear ratio to ease the strain on the engine. So, we really weren't real competitive down there. He didn't do much to change it. That's what John wanted, so that's what we did. He said, "I want to finish this race and go back to Seattle with some equipment." If we broke it all, we wouldn't have had anything to run in Seattle. We didn't know, at the time, that he was going to shut the operation down when we got back, which is what he did.

**Before we wrap this up, there are a couple other boats you drove that we haven't mentioned. You drove the U-22,**

**and took the sponsor, Seth Landau out for a ride. You also drove Miss Kentuckiana Paving in Detroit. How about the U-22 first?**

I drove it for two reasons. One, because Seth is a good friend. The other is because I wanted to drive a 25-year-old hydroplane. See, that's the way I remember things. I got to drive the *Kentuckiana Paving* in Detroit. Jon Peddie hadn't shown up yet and they needed to get the boat qualified. Pappy [Bill Cantrell] asked me if I'd take the boat out, and I didn't hesitate for a second. To drive a vintage machine like that, and to drive an Allison in one of the old *Gale* boats—you know, old *Gale* river boat is what it is—was a great thrill.

**Now, that thing flies!**

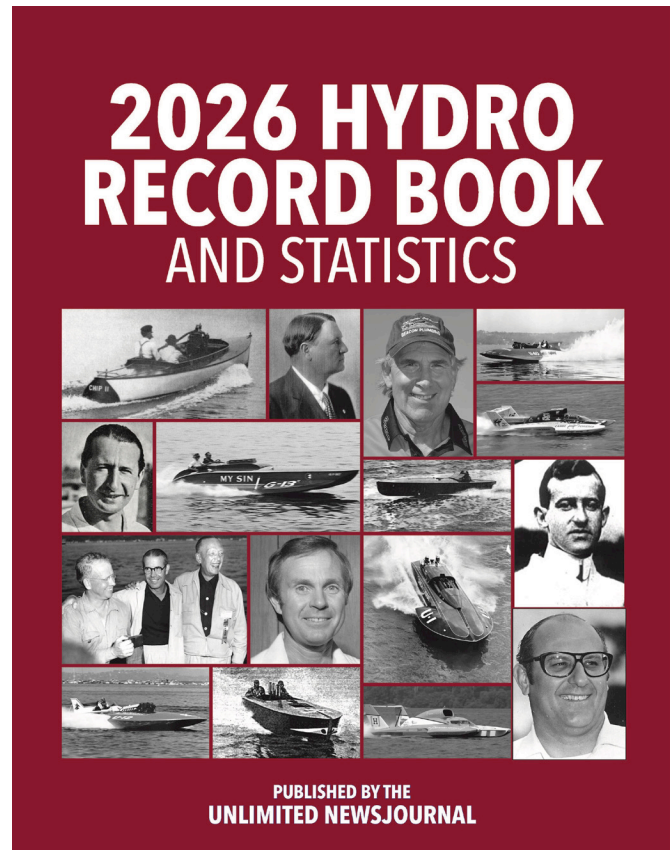
It does. It really does. Big difference between that boat and the U-22. But I wanted to drive that U-22 to say that I'd driven a 25-year-old hull. I remember 'em when I was a kid. It's like Rick Mears going back and driving Rodger Ward's '59 Indy winner. It was a real big thrill. That's why I did it. Unfortunately, we had a bad oil leak and a bad water leak and we couldn't see, but we still had a good time. I'm glad they got pictures of that. It was great, just great. ❖

# 2026 Hydro Record Book available free to UNJ readers

**E**ver have a heated debate with a fellow hydro fan over the question of which boat has won the most Gold Cups? Maybe you've wondered which driver in history has finished the most heats or has been the fastest qualifier more often than anyone else?

For the seventh year in a row, the *Unlimited NewsJournal* has provided you with a document that can settle just about every debate you could ever have about the sport of Unlimited hydroplane racing. Can't recall who won the 1949 New Jersey Governor's Cup on Lake Hopatcong? The Record Book has the answer. (Harry Lynn in *Lahala*) Hasn't every true hydro fan had a debate with friends about which boat has won the most heats? Now, you can finally settle the matter by checking page 28 of the Record Book. And, which driver has had the most race victories with the same owner? You know where to look.

The book includes data in a total of 46 different categories about drivers, owners, boats, and race sites, as well as speed records. The 2026 edition includes updated data using the results from last season and, like the previous six editions, it offers new features. This year, we've added records about the number of heats finished by drivers, the number of time drivers and boats have been the fastest qualifier for a race, and a list of which boats have won the most national titles. A feature added last year that you're sure to appreciate is an index by hull that lists every boat that has won a race since 1922.



But, that's not all. The best thing about the Hydro Record Book is its price.

It's **FREE!**

To get your copy of this 52-page publication, simply go to our website. You can read it there, bookmark it, download it to your computer, or print yourself a copy. We've got a feeling that you'll refer to it often. You'll find the Hydro Record Book at [www.unlimitednewsjournal.net](http://www.unlimitednewsjournal.net). Just click on the link at the top of the home page.

Every hydro fan needs a copy.

On the following pages are a few samples of what you'll find inside this year's edition of the Hydro Record Book. ❖

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6. Ken Muscatel.....126	17. Jerry Hopp ..... 90	28. Bob Miller .....68
7. Mike Hanson .....124	18. Bob Gilliam ..... 86	29. Jimmy Shane .....64
8. Bill Cantrell.....118	Jimmy King..... 85	30. Todd Yarling.....63
9. Mark Evans .....109	20. Tom D'Eath .....78	31. Steve Reynolds.....59
10. J. Michael Kelly .....108	21. Nate Brown.....77	32. Jack Schafer, Jr. ....58
11. Fred Alter.....101	22. Dean Chenoweth.....76	Jeff Bernard.....58

## BEST PERCENTAGE OF RACES WON vs. RACES ENTERED:

Among drivers who have entered more than 20 races.

	WINS	RACES	PCT.			
1. Dave Villwock .....68	157	0.433	16. Lou Fageol.....6	28.....0.214		
2. Jimmy Shane .....25	64	0.391	17. Tom D'Eath .....16	78.....0.205		
3. Chip Hanauer .....61	158	0.386	18. Mickey Remund .....11	54.....0.204		
4. Andrew Tate .....13	35	0.371	19. Bill Sterett.....6	31.....0.194		
5. George Henley .....12	33	0.364	20. J. Michael Kelly .....18	108.....0.167		
6. Ron Musson .....16	47	0.340	Jean Theoret.....6	36.....0.167		
Danny Foster .....17	50	0.340	Dan Arena.....4	24.....0.167		
8. Dean Chenoweth.....25	76	0.329	23. Chuck Thompson.....15	91.....0.165		
9. Bill Muncey .....62	194	0.319	24. Guy Lombardo.....5	31.....0.161		
10. Jim Kropfeld.....22	69	0.318	25. Bill Brow .....6	38.....0.158		
11. Jack Regas.....9	30	0.300	26. Lee Schoenith.....7	48.....0.146		
12. Bill Stead .....9	32	0.281	27. Bill Cantrell.....16	118.....0.136		
13. Corey Peabody.....7	26	0.269	28. Don Wilson.....6	45.....0.133		
14. Billy Schumacher .....17	71	0.239	29. Mark Tate.....12	95.....0.126		
15. Mira Slovak.....10	45	0.222	30. Warner Gardner.....6	56.....0.107		

## MOST RACES AS THE FASTEST QUALIFIER AMONG DRIVERS:

1. Dave Villwock .....	82	11. Steve David .....	12	21. Chuck Thompson.....	5
2. Chip Hanauer .....	78	12. Bill Brow .....	11	Leif Borgersen .....	5
3. Bill Muncey .....	45	13. Mark Tate.....	10	Lou Fageol.....	5
4. Jimmy Shane .....	28	14. George Henley .....	8	Ron Musson .....	5
5. Billy Schumacher .....	17	Scott Pierce.....	8	25. Bill Cantrell.....	4
6. Andrew Tate.....	16	Steve Reynolds.....	8	Corey Peabody.....	4
Jim Kropfeld.....	16	17. Don Wilson.....	7	Jim McCormick .....	4
8. Dean Chenoweth.....	15	18. Bill Stead .....	6	Mike Hanson .....	4
9. Mickey Remund .....	13	Jean Theoret.....	6	Roy Duby .....	4
Tom D'Eath .....	13	Nate Brown.....	6		

## MOST NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS AMONG OWNERS:

1. Bernie Little .....	22	Dossin Brothers .....	3	13. George Reis .....	2
2. Miss Madison, Inc .....	12	Vic Kliesrath.....	3	Herb Mendelson .....	2
3. Ole Bardahl .....	6	Erick Ellstrom.....	3	Ted Porter .....	2
4. Joe Schoenith.....	4	Fran Muncey.....	3	William Waggoner .....	2
5. Bill Muncey .....	3	Willard Rhodes.....	3	Joe Little .....	2
Dave Heerensperger .....	3	Horace Dodge .....	3		

## MOST GOLD CUP VICTORIES AMONG OWNERS:

1. Bernie Little .....	14	9. Bill Muncey .....	3	George Townsend.....	2
2. Fran Muncey.....	7	George Reis.....	3	Horace Dodge .....	2
3. Miss Madison, Inc.....	6	Jonathan Wainwright.....	3	Jesse Vincent.....	2
4. Erick Ellstrom.....	5	Vanessa/Darrell Strong.....	3	Joe Schoenith.....	2
Gar Wood .....	5	13. Caleb Bragg.....	2	Mike and Lori Jones .....	2
Ole Bardahl .....	5	Dave Heerensperger .....	2	Steve Woomer.....	2
Stan Sayres.....	5	Edward Schroeder .....	2	Vic Kliesrath.....	2
8. Willard Rhodes.....	4	Fred Leland.....	2	Zalmon Simmons.....	2

## MOST CAREER RACE VICTORIES AMONG BOATS:

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

1. #0116 Miss E-Lam Plus (a) .....	27	12. #8401 Atlas Van Lines (h) .....	17
2. #0001 (T-6) Miss Budweiser (b).....	26	13. #8901 (T-3) Miss Budweiser .....	16
#0706 Oh Boy! Oberto (c) .....	26	14. #5960 Miss Thriftway .....	14
4. #7701 Atlas Van Lines .....	24	#7025 Pride of Pay 'n Pak (i) .....	14
#8701 (T-2) Miss Budweiser .....	24	16. #6240 Miss Bardahl .....	12
6. #8700 Miss Circus Circus (d).....	23	#8200 Atlas Van Lines (j).....	12
#9712 (T-5) Miss Budweiser (e).....	23	18. #6812 Miss Budweiser .....	11
8. #7325 Pay 'n Pak (f).....	22	#1801 Miss HomeStreet (k) .....	11
#8012 Miss Budweiser.....	22	20. #5608 Hawaii Kai III .....	10
10. #0009 Jones Racing (g).....	18	#6740 Miss Bardahl .....	10
#9501 (T-3/rebuilt in 1995) Miss Budweiser.....	18	22. #2202 El Lagarto .....	9

### ALSO WON RACES AS ...

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| (a) Ellstrom, Amos W Hoss, and Spirit of Qatar                                  | (g) Tubby's Grilled Submarines, Miss Sun Harbor Mortgage, Les Schwab/Sound Propeller, Delta Realtrac, Pinnacle Peak Consulting, Lynx Healthcare , and Beacon Plumbing |
| (b) Formulaboats.com, Valken Sports, and Graham Trucking                        | (h) Miller American, Miller High Life, Miss Circus Circus, and American Spirit  |
| (c) Oberto, Miss HomeStreet, and Goodman Real Estate presents Miss HomeStreet   | (i) Miss Budweiser  |
| (d) Winston Eagle, Smokin' Joe's, Close Call, Wildfire, and Miss Al Deeby Dodge | (j) The Squire Shop, Oh Boy! Oberto, and Miss T-Plus  |
| (e) Formulaboats.com II and Graham Trucking                                     | (k) Miss Goodman Real Estate  |
| (f) Atlas Van Lines and Miss Rich Plan  |   |

## MOST CAREER GOLD CUP VICTORIES AMONG BOATS:

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

1. #0116 Miss E-Lam Plus .....	5	#5027 Slo-mo-shun IV.....	3
2. #8401 Atlas Van Lines .....	4	#7701 Atlas Van Lines .....	3
#8700 Miss Circus Circus .....	4	#9501 (T-3) Miss Budweiser.....	3
#0706 Oh Boy! Oberto .....	4		
#0009 Jones Racing.....	4		
6. #2202 El Lagarto .....	3		

A total of 16 boats had two Gold Cup victories

## MOST CAREER RACE APPEARANCES AMONG BOATS:

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 .....	86
3. #7325 Pay 'N Pak .....	129	12. #8410 Miss Tosti Asti .....	77
4. #8200 Atlas Van Lines .....	115	13. #8803 Risley's Express .....	73
5. #8808 Mr. Pringles.....	103	14. #0308 Llumar Window Film.....	68
6. #0001 (T-6) Miss Budweiser .....	102	#7902 The Squire Shop.....	68
7. #8401 Atlas Van Lines .....	100	16. #6079 Nitrogen Too.....	63
8. #9302 Miss T-Plus.....	90	17. #0116 Miss E-Lam Plus .....	62
9. #0009 Jones Racing.....	88	#9899 U-99 .....	62

## MOST RACES AS THE FASTEST QUALIFIER AMONG BOATS:

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

1. #0116 Miss E-Lam Plus .....	49	9. #7325 Pay 'N Pak.....	20
2. #8701 (T-2) Miss Budweiser .....	31	#7701 Atlas Van Lines .....	20
3. #0706 Oh Boy! Oberto.....	26	#9501 (T-3) Miss Budweiser.....	20
4. #9712 (T-5) Miss Budweiser .....	24	12. #8200 Atlas Van Lines .....	17
5. #8401 Atlas Van Lines .....	23	13. #8012 Miss Budweiser.....	16
#1801 Miss HomeStreet .....	23	14. #0009 Jones Racing.....	12
7. #8700 Miller American .....	21	15. #7474 Valu-Mart .....	10
#8901 (T-3) Miss Budweiser .....	21	16. #0001 (T-6) Miss Budweiser .....	9

## WE NEED YOUR HELP

**T**he Unlimited NewsJournal is provided free to its readers every month, but, of course, nothing is free. Although you don't pay to receive the publication, it still takes money and effort to produce it. Here are two ways you can help support the *NewsJournal*.

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please consider making a donation that will help defray costs and make its publication possible. Checks can be made out to the Unlimited NewsJournal and mailed to Dick Sanders, UNJ Treasurer, 4239 S. 261st St., Kent, WA 98032.

**STORIES:** Several of our contributors have passed away in recent years. Fortunately, a few readers stepped up this year to provide new stories, and our small staff upped their game, too. Thank you. If you have a story to tell, want to interview someone related to the sport, or have an idea you'd like to write about, please step up! If you'd like to cover a race for us, let us know and we can talk about it. You don't have to be an accomplished writer. We have a qualified staff who can edit your piece. Feel free to contact our editor, Andy Muntz, at [ajmuntz@icloud.com](mailto:ajmuntz@icloud.com).

# THE FAMILY BUSINESS



**A** remarkable event occurred one day in 1992 when three of the sport's greatest boat designers sat together with a panel of three reporters for the *Unlimited NewsJournal*. Even more remarkable was the fact that the three men, who created boats that dominated the sport for more than four decades, were from the same family.

Ted Jones, the eldest family member, gained fame in 1950 as the designer of *Slo-mo-shun IV*, a hydroplane that turned the sport on its head with its revolutionary three-point, prop-riding configuration. The success of that boat was followed by his creation of boats such as *Miss Thriftway*, *Hawaii Kai III*, *Miss Wahoo*, *Shanty I*, *Maverick*, and *Miss Bardahl*—

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hydroplanes that would win 75 races, including 14 Gold Cups, and 10 national championships during the 1950s and early 1960s.

When he retired, his son, Ron Jones, took over to become among the most innovative boat builders of the 1970s and 1980s. Among his creations were the “Winged Wonder” *Pay ‘N Pak* of 1973, the dominating Griffon-powered *Miss Budweiser* of 1980. His son, “J.R.” (Ron Jr.) would later become a driving and innovative force in modern Unlimited racing. Among his creations was an innovative two-winged hull that debuted in 1992 as *Coor’s Dry*. That craft still races today. Corey Peabody drove it last season as the U-9 *Beacon Plumbing*, and is the oldest boat to ever win a race. At the time of the event, Ron, Jr., had also become involved in the sport as a team owner.

The gathering of the three generations of hydro designers that day in 1992 can never be repeated. All three of the racing legends—grandfather, son, and grandson—have now all passed away. Ted Jones left us in January 2000 at the age of 90, Ron Jones died in January 2017, and Ron Jones, Jr., passed away in April 2024. Our only record of the discussion the three had together is a story that was originally published in the *Unlimited NewsJournal* in June 1992 and that is being repeated for you now.

The interview panel that asked the questions included Craig Fjarlie, who still writes for the *NewsJournal*; Jeff Meyer, who served as news editor of the *NewsJournal* when the event happened; and Dr. Ken Muscatel, a hydro driver and team owner who was the founder of the Antique Raceboat Foundation.

**UNJ: Ron Sr., could you tell us about the accomplishments of your father?**

Dad’s accomplishments are so many, it would take forever to go over them. He experimented with propellers, rudders, hull shapes, deck pressure. He brought boat racing so far along in such a short time. *Slo-mo-shun IV* speaks the whole story. When he went to Detroit in 1950, *Slo-mo* lapped the entire field. That wasn’t just a little better; it was better enough to

lap the best boats of the day.

*Slo-mo* certainly was a leap that can stand out for a long time to come. If you were living in the ‘40s and ‘50s you wouldn’t have been able to comprehend how big that leap was. Today maybe things don’t go ahead quite that quickly. And he did all those things in an era when there was very little, if anything, to look at and copy.

Not only did dad design and build boats, but he drove them. He could decide what the boat needed by feeling it. There are not too many people today who can do that. Most boat drivers haven’t a clue about what’s going on with the hull. They can give you a lot of things they

perceive, and none of them line up with what’s really going on. This guy could do that. He could feel it, and he knew what was going on. He had a thing in the seat of his pants that said, “This is what you ought to do next time.”

**Continue along the same lines about your son, Ron Jr.**

When J.R. was in high school, he used to come down and sweep the shop. The thing I noticed immediately was that he was faster than anybody I had ever seen. I’ve gone through a couple hundred people in the boat business over the last 40 years, some of the very best. Nobody picked it up as quickly and did the work as quickly. He is unquestionably the best

CAPTION FOR PHOTOS ON PRECEDING PAGE: From the left, Ted Jones, Ron Jones, and Ron Jones, Jr. Photo credits: from the left, Bob Carver Photos, Hydroplane and Raceboat Museum, Jones Family Collection.



boatbuilder anywhere today. There isn't anybody who can put things together with any more accuracy, more quickly, and comprehend the whole picture. He thinks about 20 moves ahead.

That's only part of it. When he watches boats, he's got a tape recorder in his head. He sees things that I don't always catch. He'll bring out things that are very critical. Now he has shown that he can put a racing team together. Ron put *American Spirit* on the road last year, made all the arrangements, did the negotiating, put the program together, hired his own team.

**Ted, tell us what you think are some of the major accomplishments of your son in design and construction.**

He and his son, they're the greatest. They're greater than their grandfather or father. Their boats are prettier to look at, they're faster, they're more expensive. They have so much ability, I can't even begin to describe it. In every way, in design-

ing and building, debating with people, making deals—this I couldn't do at all.

I had the advantage. I had no competition, because no one in Seattle ever had anything to do with an Unlimited before. My competition was nil. I put a boat together the way I thought it should be, and it ran. That's all I can say about it. They're better than I am.

#### **How about Ron Jr?**

I was the foreman of the shop when he became a boatbuilder. I noticed how rapidly and accurately he put things together. He's going to go a long way.

#### **Ted, how did you get the boats to prop ride?**

I built an inboard hydroplane years and years ago, for myself, and I had no idea what angle of attack or dihedral were. They were something I had no reason to know. So, I built this boat with flat sponsons, no dihedral, no V in them at all. I got to a tum, turned the wheel, and just kept going straight ... a revolting development. So, I knew that something was wrong with flat sponsons.

To find out what angle of attack was, I finally put a piece of plywood on the sponson bottom, screwed it onto the leading edge, and let it bang against the bottom of the flat sponsons. I put a wedge under it. When I started forward, I tapped these wedges with a hammer and induced angle of attack in each sponson. I finally went so fast, I couldn't control it.

Then I took the boat out of the water and measured how much angle of attack. It worked real great. I still had a problem with dihedral, so

**ABOVE:** Ted Jones became famous as the designer of both *Slo-mo-shun IV* (the U-27 above) and *Slo-mo-shun V* for Stan Sayres. The two boats dominated Gold Cup racing during the early 1950s and were responsible for creating a passion for the sport of hydro racing in Seattle. **LEFT:** From the left, Ted Jones, Ron Jones, and Ron Jones, Jr. together for an event in 1985.

**“He and his son, they're the greatest. They're greater than their grandfather or father. Their boats are prettier to look at, they're faster, they're more expensive. They have so much ability, I can't even begin to describe it.”**

I made little wedges and learned about dihedral.

**How did the concept of prop riding come to you?**

I have to admit that I came about this prop-riding thing by accident. I had a little hydroplane that I took up to a lake just north of here. I had to put the engine forward about three feet to get the shaft in line, due to the depth of the oil pan. The boat picked up about 30 miles per hour right now.

The tail end of the boat went up and, man, I was moving out like twice as fast. Moving the center of gravity forward took the weight off the propeller, and the afterplane went up so rapidly. I had a true prop rider that was about twice the speed that I ever had before. This was about 1932 or 1933.

**Ron, what do you recall about how your father got Slo-mo-shun to prop ride?**

I remember boats called *Wasp* and *Phantom* limited-class boats, in the early, early days. They all prop rode. It wasn't something where he sat down one night, and the light came on. It was rather serendipitous. He got all that junk, as he says, out of the water. The speeds went up, and after that it was "Katy, bar the door!"

I remember very well his coming home the first day he ever ran *Slo-mo IV*. The transition to prop riding was more



Bob Carver Photos

Among the first projects for Ted Jones after he left the *Slo-mo* team in 1952 was the creation in 1955 of the first of three hydros to carry the name *Miss Thriftway*.

violent than it had been with the little boats. They kind of finally got the tail up, and it wasn't a big event. But when *Slo-mo IV* left the dock, the bow started up, and all of a sudden "whoop!" The tail would pop, and the boat would take a sudden jump to the right. You just learned to put a little compensation on the steering wheel as it went from draggin' the tail to prop riding.

Of course, after that, every boat was drawn the same way.

**Ted, we can see the evolution of your ideas in Slo-mo-shun IV, and V. For instance, what was your thinking from the III to the IV?**

Well, in those days, we didn't have much power. Maybe a Mercury or Ford engine, 85 horsepower or something. I

put a lot of lift in the nose of the *III*; that made it a little difficult to get the tail up. I hadn't gotten a propeller yet that would do the job the way I wanted it to.

With *Slo-mo III*, I built in too much bow lift to get it going with the least amount of horsepower. I finally got it to prop ride, but it was very difficult because of that bow lift always fighting against it.

The *IV* was built primarily to go straight, fast. Then I needed a boat that would accelerate to 140 in about four seconds, so I built *Slo-mo V* with a tremendous amount of lift: three degrees on the tunnel. I had to keep it from going over backwards, because I had all angle of attack on air and water, so I deepened the strut to 9-3/4 inches and the sponsons were only seven inches deep. When it would prop ride, it would kick the tail up a couple inches higher than the nose. In place of five degrees angle of attack on the whole boat, I had only three degrees, which was thought to be optimum in those days. It would accelerate tremendously to 140 in about four and a quarter seconds, because it was loose on the water.

**Ron, what other things did your father do later into the '50s and early '60s?**

One thing was the bow spoiler, which I could never understand. I understood why he did it, but I always thought maybe that wasn't a good idea. He had a bow spoiler in the middle of the tunnel



Bob Carver Photos

Among the most beloved Ted Jones boats was the Hawaii Kai III that he created for Edgar Kaiser in 1956.

so, in case the thing wanted to dive in, it had something to recover and pull itself out, particularly at the Detroit River.

When dad got the order for the '58 *Bardahl*, I talked him out of the bow spoiler. I didn't want to step on his toes real bad, so I took, as it were, the two pieces that formed the original V, turned them over, and put them against the air trap.

Dad also persuaded some builders to make propellers where there was some rake angle equal to the shaft angle at least. Dad thought the thrust line should be pointing the way the boat wanted to go. In the early days, all propellers had zero-degree rake. We used to call them rainmakers, because the roostertail will go right straight up from the transom. Propeller improvements were very, very helpful. The propeller is the most dynamic thing on the boat.

Dad used 45-degree non-trips, because, his explanation to me was, "Well, we know that 90 degrees is no good. That'll tip you over, and flat isn't good enough. So, half way between must be about right."

As he mentioned, on *Slo-mo V*, he lifted the nose a little bit, because he wanted it to accelerate better. But *Slo-mo V* had a very unusual straight-line bottom, too. All boats in those days had a round bottom. You started at the bow, drew a line, and it rounded down somewhere at or just behind the end of the sponson. On the *V*, the bottom had a straight line from the bow to a break point just behind the sponson, then another straight line all the way to the stem. That was the first time that had been used.

He had the rudder on the right side of *Slo-mo IV* at one time. When it was in the middle of the transom, the roostertail started eating the metal right off the rudder. So, he moved it over to get it out of the blast of the roostertail. Actually, the boat ran better, turned better. Another serendipitous thing.

#### **Any other influential ideas?**

*Thriftway, Too* was meant to be a

twin-engine giant to run on the Detroit River against the Detroit boats. He decided that if he put two engines in there, the guy in the back was going to have a big problem seeing around all that mess. So, he put the driver in the front.

I forget how old I was then. I wasn't very old, and I know he didn't pay much attention to me. But I wanted to cut the sponsons off, and he wanted to make them longer. We argued about that.

Ted: I goofed on *Thriftway, Too*. I made the afterplane too long.

Ron: Too short.

J.R.: Which is it?

Ron: Too short.

Ted: Sponsons too long.

Ron: OK, now we've got it.

#### **J.R., could you tell us what your dad did to improve the boats in the '60s and '70s?**

Well, I didn't really get involved in the deal until the early '70s. I graduated from high school in 1975 and was more interested in goofing around, hanging out with the guys on the block, shooting a BB gun. I really didn't pay a whole lot of attention to what the boats were doing.

#### **Just in the 15 years of your career, what are some of the major advances and changes?**

The major coup happened in 1979 at a meeting just like this. My dad went to the chalk board and drew a transom

view of what the right sponson was going to look like on the 1979 Griffon-powered *Budweiser*. He put an extra non-trip in there and showed that he was going to lay down the right-hand non-trip and put an inside secondary on the sponson.

Speeds went from respectable to 135 mph in competition.

#### **Ron, how have construction techniques changed through the years?**

The construction of *Slo-mo IV* and *V* was unique. All the frames were built very much like you would have built a wood airplane in those days. Lots of little, teeny pieces all gusseted together. A lot of laminated spruce and oak. The spruce, being lighter in weight, would take the weight out. The oak in the middle or on the edges would give it stiffness and hold the fastener. Spruce doesn't hold fasteners as well. And they laid up 45-degree-diagonal plywood, which is stronger than 0-90. It was all very thin and very light.

#### **What kind of glue did they use?**

Ferdico aviation glue was kind of goopy stuff that you used to put joints together. And then, when things got really advanced, Weldwood glue. You mixed water with powder. Right on the can it said "water resistant." Water-resistant doesn't mean waterproof. But it worked really well. For a long time, that was the hot deal. Then phenolic glues came



Bob Carver Photos

Ted Jones designed this hydro for Ole Bardahl in 1958. The *Miss Bardahl*, which was built by his son, Ron Jones, won the national championship in its first year of competition.



**TOP:** Ron Jones introduced the sport to the horizontal stabilizer, or wing, with the creation of the "Winged Wonder" *Pay 'n Pak* in 1973. **ABOVE:** *Pay 'n Pak* was so successful, other boat owners soon ordered hydros from Jones that also sported wings. An example is *Weisfield's*, which was built in 1974.

along, then some polyurethane glues. In recent years, the best thing that's happened is products like WEST System or System 3, which are epoxy adhesives.

**Glues and epoxies remind us of honeycomb aluminum, certainly a pivotal material when it comes to Unlimited construction.**

We built the '73 *Pay 'n Pak* of honeycomb aluminum with a lot of plywood on round surfaces. It actually started in 1963 when my wife, Bev, and I moved our family and shop to northern California. One day a guy named Zale Puhlman wandered in. He represented Hexcel. He had some samples of aluminum honeycomb, and boy, I was impressed. I'd never heard of it. But when he told me how much it would cost, I decided that wasn't a material we would be using in hydro-

planes very soon.

Then I got the order from Dave Heerensperger to build the *Pay 'n Pak*. When everybody had signed the contract and I got up to leave, he said, "Wait a minute," and gave me Zale Puhlman's business card. The same guy, nine years later.

"This guy called on me a few days ago, and said he really wishes we'd use his product in our race boat," Heerensperger said. "Please call the guy. I don't suppose you can use this stuff, but I promised him we'd look into it." So, I called, and he sent Hal Loomis to see me. He and I figured out how to put it together.

By the way, to tell you how things happen, at that same meeting in Mr. Heerensperger's office, I told him I wanted to put a wing on the boat. He was very

much against that. He couldn't understand why you would put a wing on a boat. After all, it's not a car, and it's not an airplane. Why does it want a wing? I tried to explain, but he said, "No way." I'm just about out the door. "Jonesy, come back here," he says. "I just thought of something. If you put a wing on my boat, I'll have the only boat with a wing on it, and I will get all the publicity. Let's put a wing on the boat."

Wings were a turning point in another way, too. By 1974, when we built *Lincoln Thrift*, *Valu-Mart*, and *Miss U.S.*, I wanted to make wings for all of them but wasn't sure how. I didn't want to hammer them out of aluminum. Some fellows I hired part-time from a local aerospace firm built a little oven and a plaster mold and showed me how to build fiberglass composites with honeycomb core. My eyes fell out of my head. I never thought that I would never be happy until I could build a boat out of all molded honeycomb. It was 10 years before we could do it.

In '84 we got our chance. We tooled the first composite-sponson boat, the '85 *Bud Griffon*. To show you how eager the boat community was to receive new ideas, new designs, new construction techniques...

When the *Budweiser* crew got the boat, they said the first thing they were going to do was cut those fiberglass sponsons off with a chain saw. It took a while to get over that. It wasn't overnight that people jumped into this idea of composite shoes.

The beauty of composites is many-fold. You can get aerodynamic shapes that you can't get with wood and aluminum honeycomb. You get strength that you can't with any other product. You get lighter weight than you can with other products. And you can get safety and repairability. Dad's boats were built of wood. If they crashed, there was usually not enough left to rebuild. So, the sponsor and team were done for the season. Today, because of composite structures, a

boat can be repaired in a few days.

J.R: We build all the fuselages, or cockpits, or center sections out of graphite material. It is so strong. Ninety-nine percent of all the pieces we build are made of E-glass or S-glass with Nomex core. It's a well-planned laminate schedule, and it's been very durable. If money is no object, then we're going to build somebody a 100 percent graphite boat. We're looking for him.

Ron: We haven't met that guy yet, but there's no going back. We're going to keep marching ahead. People are calling us with new ideas or new products like a new material called Spectra. It's supposed to be stronger than graphite and half the weight. Where do you stop?

**We've overlooked the picklefork on your list of contributions.**

Everybody takes that for granted. In conversations with my aerodynamics friend Jim Raisbeck (this was in 1963), he kept saying that my boats had too much wing area. I used to nod in agreement, because I was too dumb to know what he was talking about. He'd ask, "What are you going to do about it?" I wasn't sure. Finally, it dawned on me that I ought to cut the nose off.

In 1965, I built a 266 hydroplane for Jack Brown. We cut the bow back 18 inches and blunted the nose. I said, "It looks like a salad fork." Bob Mackey, who's been with me since forever, said, "picklefork." That's how those names get started.

Interestingly enough, the boat was a lot faster than an identical boat with a long, rounded bow. So, in my pea brain, I concluded that the blunt nose was a little more efficient aerodynamically than the long, pointy bow.

Everybody knows that anything that's sharp and pointed is fast, right? It looks fast. But at the speeds that we go, we've got to have blunt leading edges.

The earliest pickleforks didn't blow over. But we made the sponsons a better shape, put the skid fins on the outside, built better propellers, and the crews built more horsepower. So, we went faster and faster, and now we have blowovers. Pickleforks can't save the day. There's a limit to cutting it back. Pretty soon, in rough water, the boat falls on its nose. So now what do you do?

We're trying twin-wing boats. That's hard to sell. I won't live long enough to sell all my ideas. I showed Bernie Little a

drawing of a two-wing boat in 1979 and couldn't sell it. It didn't look like a boat anybody had seen, and I couldn't prove that it would work.

J.R: That's what we're going to build for 1993. Two-wing boats aren't new. It's just been 20 years before they got built. Nobody could take the chance of spending \$200,000 on something you want to saw up and throw in the dumpster.

Ron: There isn't enough money in hydroplane racing to do what we ought to do. Perhaps wind tunnel investigation, computational fluid dynamics, manned prototypes that are throwaway boats to be changed and changed and changed until you finally get the exact shape. That's the only way we can learn. There is no one who can tell us how to do these things. It's either take a flyer and do it, or you'll never do anything. That's one problem you face when you're trying to become a boat designer.

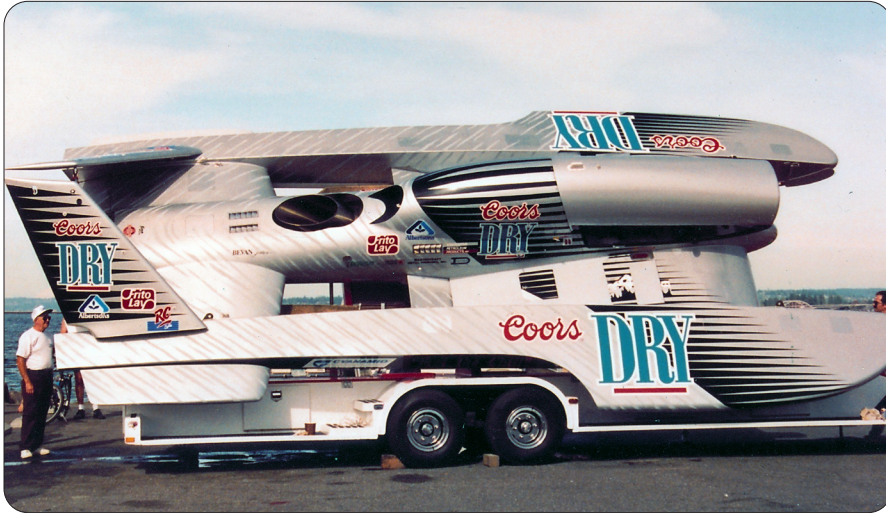
**J.R., since you're the next generation, what do you see for the future?**

We don't know if it's going to be a two-wing boat, a three-wing boat, a one-wing boat, a nine-wing boat. I see people trying different avenues, sticking their necks out a little bit. We all know we have



Randy Hall

Another dominant Ron Jones creation was the *Miss Budweiser* of 1980. Driven by Dean Chenoweth, the boat was powered by a massive Rolls-Royce Griffon engine and still holds the record for winning 20 consecutive heats.



Ron Jones, Jr., continued the legacy of innovation established by his father and grandfather when he produced *Coo's Dry* in 1992, a boat that had two wings incorporated into its hull. Though modified, the craft still races today, having competed last season as the *U-9 Beacon Plumbing*.

“x” for an engine, “x” variables for gear ratios, and you can really spend oodles of money on propellers. But there are still limits. How do you get a boat to fly over the water, just a little bit higher than the next guy, without getting out of shape? That’s what *Budweiser’s* trying to do, that’s what I’m going to do, and I think that’s what Jim Lucero’s attempting.

**Do you see yourself as a designer and builder in the future, as an owner, or both?**

I guess I’ll always be a builder no matter how much Steve Woomer tells me, “You can’t keep getting your clothes dirty. You’ve got to shake people’s hands!”

**Steve Woomer tells you this?**

If I am going to be an owner, get sponsorships, and press on in that aspect, then I’ve got to take off the coveralls and take care of business. It’s very frustrating for me, because while I’m explaining what tools for the guy to go get, what part I want cut out, how many rivets, and the mix ratio for the glue, I could’ve had it done. It’s very easy for me. It’s going to be very difficult for me to walk away and not build boats.

**How fast do you predict that we’ll be going five years from now?**

Mr. Little made a very bold statement that *Miss Budweiser* will be the first Unlimited hydroplane to go 170 mph on

a 2 1/2-mile course. He didn’t say when it was going to be, or where it was going to be, but the statement was made.

If you could know that the skid fin is going to be there and you could have an “unobtainium” steel propeller that’s not going to break, you could probably go 180 mph around a 2 1/2-mile course. It might take a couple of years. Because if the guy is in an absolute flying machine, this far off the water, and he can have his foot all the way down, if he just steers and backs off, he’s going 200 down the straightaway. There’s no reason why he can’t go 180 off the exit pin. That’s a scary thought, though.

**A question for all three of you. You have gone through periods where people have, to put it mildly, copied what you have done. Is that necessarily bad? In our own lines of work, we all copy to some extent.**

Ron: I’m almost embarrassed to tell you how I feel about it. Everybody tries to console you by saying, “Well, don’t you know that imitation is the most sincere form of flattery? You should feel flattered that they’re copying you.”

You see, I always thought I’ll go do my thing. I started out building boats that my dad drew on the back of an envelope. Before long it dawned on me that I’d have to do my own thing, or I’d always

just build the same boat over and over. So, I started building a boat of a different shape. Even if it was wrong, I wanted it to be different. I wanted to do my own thing. I thought if I do my own thing, I’ll sink or swim by whatever it is that I do.

For a while, we began to swim OK. Then for 10 years, I virtually had to give the boats away. The first wide-transom, low-profile, rear-engine, inboard hydroplane that I built from scratch to finish was *Tiger Too*. In order to get the guy to buy the boat, I had to make a deal that I’d build that boat for \$500 and an old engine that he had lying around. I made that kind of arrangement just to get that boat across. I knew it would work.

**Kind of like your dad did.**

Yeah, if it works, you make your point. Then you think—incorrectly—that the world is going to beat a path to your door, that you’re finally going to get paid back for all this time and effort. But what happens? These guys go to their favorite builder and say, “Can you do what he did?” And they do that! They copy what you do.

Now, at first, it’s a personal thing, an emotional thing. Worse than all the emotion, you only have to sell what you can think of. That’s all I can sell. I can only dream up something, then I can sell it, and that’s how I get my return. But if I find everybody else building what I think of, then it affects the return. There isn’t any return. I think that’s the thing that stings the worst. Anybody who knows me knows that if we ever made a nickel on a boat (and I’d like to hear about it if we ever did), it went right back into trying how to make the next boat go. So, there’s a point of no return. How can you live with that? The emotion is one thing; the non-return is another. The two together make it difficult.

J.R: We built the tooling for Unlimited sponsons (or canoes as we call them), and in ‘86 or ‘87 sold the first set to *Miss Budweiser*. Various other people have bought shoes and parts. Nobody beat a path to our door, but by doing that we’ve

now taken ourselves out of the complete-construction picture.

We made the decision not to keep this technology to ourselves. We have to allow people, if they choose, to build a boat. We have to make the parts available. We can sell a set of cowlings to somebody but don't have to install them. We just stick them in a shipping crate.

**Who might be the Unlimited designers of the future? And what is it they're going to have to know? What will their skills have to be?**

Ron: People have come to me or have written me about this. I want to tell the guy to become a stock broker or something, because I know all the grief and the heartache. When I was a kid, my dad told me, "I don't want you to build boats." He wouldn't even let me in the basement where he was building boats. He kept a padlock on the door. He took the key to the padlock with him to work. Except that he didn't know that I used to find a way in. I'd look at those boats and drool all over them.

He wanted me to be in real estate. Well, if I would've applied myself at real estate as hard as I have applied myself at hydros, I'd own all of Washington by now. But, I didn't. I chose boats.

I don't know what to tell people who want to design boats. The reason is that

what you design turns out to be the sum of all that has gone through your mind when you build a boat, watch it run. I've driven many of the boats that I've built. You learn from drivers, from video tapes of the boats in slow motion. Without that background, it's going to be tough to get into it. There's no academic stuff that you can turn to. It isn't there.

J.R.: In fact, it's very easy today for somebody to walk off the street who has mechanical knowledge, mathematics, physics, and stuff like that. If he attends the whole circuit, takes movies or whatever, and then sneaks back there at 2 a.m. and measures whoever's running the best, his baseline starts at 1992. He doesn't have to start with a sheet of plywood in 1949. There is no "What am I going to do?" He's got a book of dimensions. He's an instant hero. But, if something hiccups, where's the knowledge to correct the problem?

**Can you envision anything that will work beyond the three-point design? Do you have any ideas that would constitute invention that you don't want to be too secretive about?**

Ron: The fastest boat would be one that didn't have any hydrodynamic surface in the water other than the propeller and the rudder. There's a way to accommodate that. It would be called a

one-point boat. Obviously, the difficulty occurs when you get to the corner. Cornering and acceleration are about 90 percent of racing.

We do have a design that we are working on, not building. I try to analyze a way to get the thing around the corner. If I could do that, they'd go 400 miles per hour. This would look very much like an airplane.

You know, there's a guy who wasn't as far off as everybody made him out to be: Armand Swensen. He was no dummy. He had the right idea. Sit the boat on the propeller, fly it with an aerodynamic set of circumstances that will keep it stable. Even if he'd got his *Miss U* to plane, there was no way it would've gone around a corner. The boat would have had to bank, and you'd have some surfaces touch the water occasionally. That's the hard spot. As soon as they touch, the boat would want to pivot. That would ruin your afternoon. But, he had a fairly good concept.

J.R.: Basically, it's how to keep the hammer down 100 percent of the time.

Ron: The three-point design isn't just going to fall away. There are so many things to be said for it, and it will probably go a lot faster. The problem is, the three-pointer has constantly got something in the water.

If you have something in the water, the three-point design is the best approach. As my dad pointed out to me when I was very young, just try to make a four-legged stool sit on an uneven surface. Can't do it. The three-point suspension will run over all kinds of rough water.

Speaking of suspension, that's another possibility: suspended hydroplanes. Where the mass of the boat stays at a constant height off the water, and the sponsons are out there doing this and that. The body of the boat never moves. That boat won't blow over, and it'll be a piece of cake for the driver.

I'll stop there. ❖



Jim Simpson

Another creation of Ron Jones, Jr., was the U-88 *Degree Men* of 2011, shown here racing in Seattle. The boat also saw action as *Miss Beacon Plumbing* in 2013 and 2014.

# MY \$0.02 WORTH

## Editorial Comment by Andy Muntz



A wonderful surprise arrived at my doorstep recently. Inside a box about the size of a ream of copy paper was a fabulous book written by former driver John Walters titled *Racing thru time*. To say I was impressed is an understatement. The book itself is beautiful—with lots of full-color photos. And, at 368 pages of thick, glossy paper, it also has substantial heft. It will sit proudly on any coffee table.

But, while the book's appearance is impressive, its content is the real winner. If you are not familiar, John Walters started racing outboards in the Spokane/Northern Idaho area and continued in the Midwest after he moved to Ohio. His first involvement with Unlimiteds came when he landed a job with Ron Jones Marine at Costa Mesa, California, where he helped build hydroplanes such as *Lincoln Thrift* and *Valu-Mart*.

He joined the crew of *Red Man* in 1974, moved to Seattle, got a job building hydros for Don Kelson, and continued being an active limited-class driver.

He then became a member of Bill Muncy's *Atlas Van Lines* crew and, when Jim Lucero left to start the *Pay 'N Pak* turbine project, Walters joined him. He was later asked to be the boat's driver.

Hydro fans likely remember the time Walters spent with the turbine *Pay 'N Pak*. He was in the boat's cockpit when it did its graceful end-over-end double backflip while testing on the Columbia River in 1980, a dramatic video that is still shown regularly, and when the boat was involved in a serious accident at Seattle in 1982. Earlier that season, he also became the first driver to win a race with a turbine-powered hydroplane.

The book goes behind the scenes through all of these events and gives us a very honest account, providing insight that we rarely see about some of the sport's characters and taking us there to what actually happened behind the scenes. As compelling as that is to a hydro fan, however, the true heart of Walters's book is his personal story—most particularly about his wife, Arlene.

The two were married when they were quite young; he was just a junior in high school. As they grew up together and raised two daughters, she suffered through severe bouts of depression that would eventually come to a heartbreaking end after more than 47 years of marriage.

Walters tells this intimate and tragic story with immense candor, compassion, and sincerity. While the book offers a compelling tale about the fun and excitement of hydroplane racing—a life that is filled with risk, loss, and triumph—we readers are reminded that often the most important story is found off the race-course.

The foreword, written by Scott Hanauer, the brother of champion Chip Hanauer and himself a clinical therapist, explains it best. "We can all learn from John and Arlene's story about family, love and, also, about emotional distress that many of us experience. ... John's book can save lives!" ❖

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