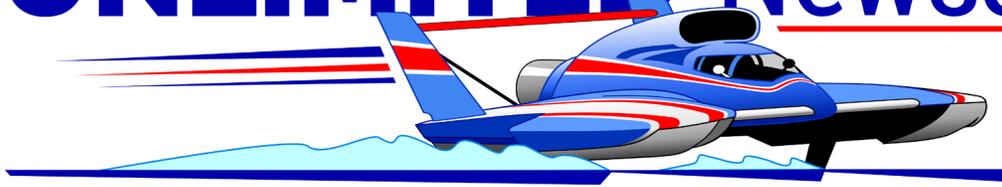


# UNLIMITED NewsJournal

A CHRONICLE OF SPEED

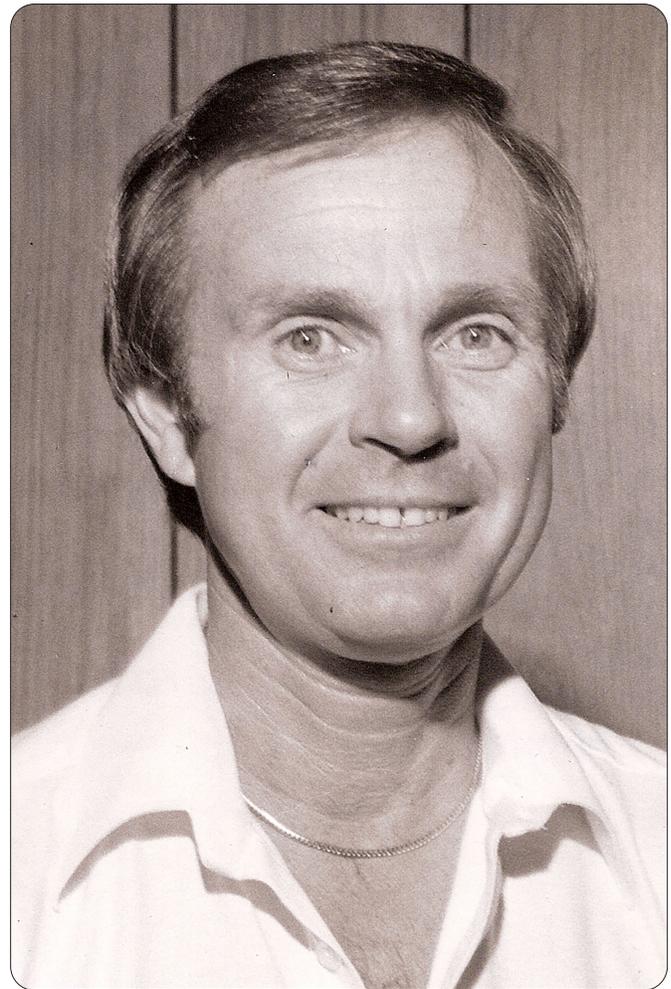


FEBRUARY 2023

FROM THE UNJ VAULT:

## A conversation with Dean Chenoweth.

Dean Chenoweth was born in Dayton, Ohio, on August 27, 1937, the son of a car dealer who sold Buicks and Pontiacs. After Chenoweth earned his bachelor's degree in business administration, he went to work at the family dealership and, when his father died in 1967, he assumed responsibility for the business. He remained in that role until 1973, when he purchased a Budweiser distributorship in Tallahassee, Florida. But there was another side to Dean Chenoweth—one that brought him fame and great success. He loved to drive fast boats and became among the most successful unlimited hydroplane drivers in the sport's history. The first portion of the following interview was conducted by Craig Fjarlie in early-July



Hydroplane and Raceboat Museum

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1980 at the Gold Cup in Madison, Indiana. At the time, Chenoweth was busy driving the brand-new Griffon-powered *Miss Budweiser*, a boat that replaced another that was destroyed during an attempt to set a world straightaway speed record the previous November. This interview was first published in the December 1980 and January 1981 issues of the *Unlimited NewsJournal*.

**UNJ: How did you get started racing boats?**

Chenoweth: That goes back a long way. My parents had a cottage near a lake about 60 miles from where we lived. They went up every weekend and I went with them. I started with a one or one-and-a-half horse Evinrude on the back of an old rowboat. Then, when I was about nine or ten, we bought a little Speedliner boat and put a Mercury on it. Fooled around with it.

They had a race down at Troy, Ohio, just kind of a lil' ol' wild cat race, for ten-horse Mercurys and flat bottom boats. I ran my first race down there, July 1950. So, July 13 of this year will be 30 years of racing.

**When you got the opportunity to drive for Lee Schoenith, what class of**

**limiteds were you driving?**

Seven litres.

**You did pretty well...**

Yeah, well, I'll tell you, it was when *Long Gone* was first in there. I drove for a fellow named Sam Ursa who had the *Sayonara*. Bill Sterret had sold his 7-litre to Mike Thomas. So, there were about six or seven good 7-litres then. I'd driven everything from a 48 to 7-litre.

**Did you have much experience with Unlimite**

Well, I'd seen 'em race. The main place I'd seen 'em was right here in Madison, because I lived close by and drove the limited boats here. It gave me the opportunity to see 'em race here in Madison.

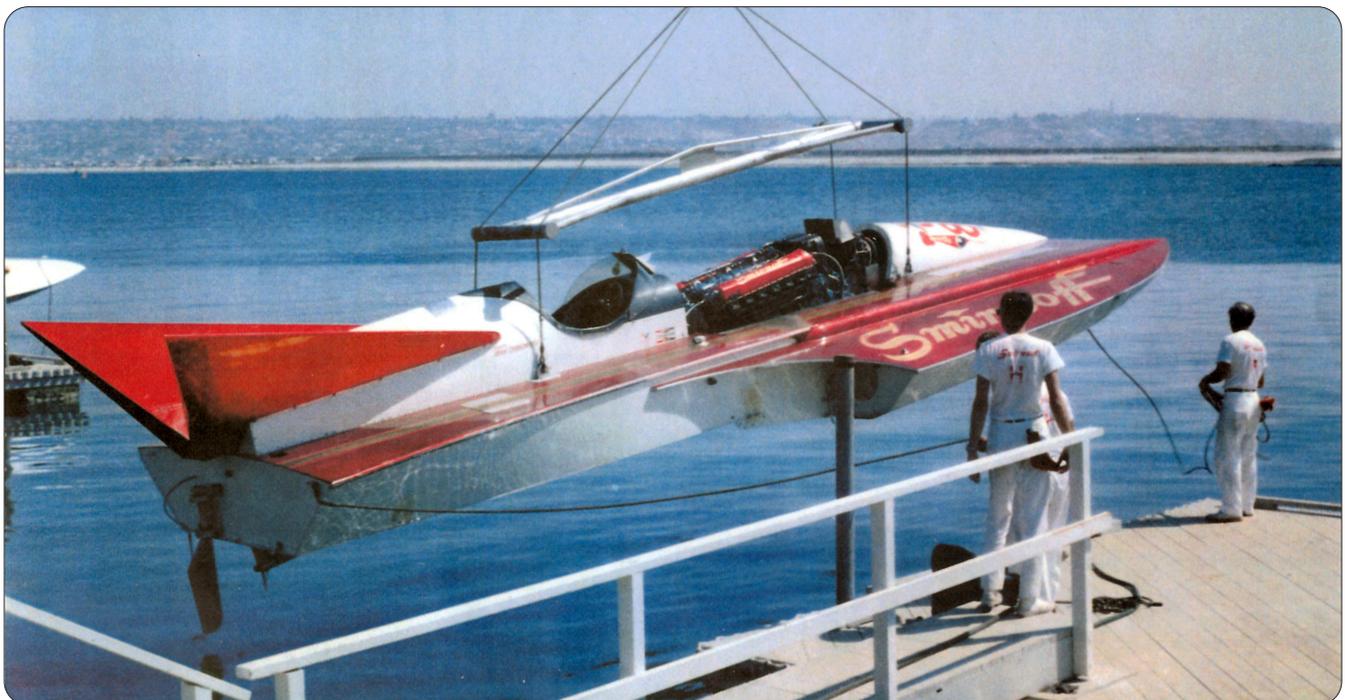
**When Lee Schoenith asked you to**

**drive the Smirnoff, did you have any idea what to expect?**

Not really. You know, Freddy Dube was building the boat. I went up to Detroit, to the *Gale* shop, and took a look at it. Naturally, I wanted to drive it. We made our debut in Guntersville, Alabama, in 1968.

**How do you recall the first time the boat was tested?**

I guess it was probably mid-May on the Detroit River. At the same time, the same day, Tommy Fults—he was a rookie—was testing the *My Gypsy* for Jim Ranger. We tested out of the Horace Dodge pits in Detroit. We might have launched it along the side at Sinbad's, I can't remember. I think we did. Had a little boat pull us out into the middle of the river.



Dean Chenoweth's first experience driving an Unlimited in competition came aboard the "bat winged" *Smirnoff* in 1968.

Eileen Crimmin



**Did they have a lot to learn? Were they experimenting along with you?**

Well, no, not really. We had very few engine problems, really. Like last year with the *Budweiser*, we had more propeller/gear-ratio-combination problems than anything else. Once we more or less got them solved, we had to live with the weight of the boat. It was just way too heavy.

**Did anyone else test it? Cantrell or anyone?**

No, I think I was the only one who drove it.

**How was it in competition, besides being too heavy? How did it turn?**

Oh, it turned well. It was a tremendous boat in that respect. But it was just too slow because of its weight.

**They ran another boat that year. Jerry Schoenith drove *Gale's Roostertail*. How did they operate with the two teams? Did they keep separate facilities?**

Yeah, basically.

**So, you didn't get too much involved with the other boat?**

Oh, no. It was pretty much a two-boat combination. They ran their race, and we ran ours.

**What did that funny tail fin do to you? Did it have an effect?**

Naw, I don't think it ever really worked. They said it would have the same effect as feathers would on an arrow of a bow and arrow, and they thought it would tend to give it more of a straight shot down the straightaway.

**Next year they'd made some changes, when it was *MYR's Special*.**

Yeah, I think they tried to cut some of that weight out and lighten it up as much as they could.

**ABOVE:** The radically designed *Smirnoff* was an attempt to use aerodynamics to improve the stability of unlimited hydros. It also turned out to be too heavy to be much of a threat. Yet, in Chenoweth's hands, the boat did place third in the 1968 Gold Cup.

**LEFT:** The crew tends to *Smirnoff* at the dock.

**"They said it would have the same effect as feathers would on an arrow of a bow and arrow, and they thought it would tend to give it more of a straight shot down the straightaway."**

**How were the conditions and how did the boat handle?**

Well, first time out the boat handled real well. We found out then what we found out later in the year, it was probably a couple thousand pounds heavier than anybody else's boat. Freddy Dube builds a masterpiece. He doesn't build a light boat. You know, if you're supposed to use quarter-inch plywood, he used three-eighths. If you're supposed to use a half-inch screw, he used an inch. Freddy pretty well beefed it up. It was an awfully heavy boat.

**They were trying some new things with the picklefork. It was the first Unlimited built with a picklefork. They also switched to Rolls on that boat—the *Gale* team had never run Rolls before.**



Sandy Ross Collection

By 1969, much weight and the arrow-feather tail were removed and the boat was given a more conventional look and a new name. In the background is the catamaran *Pride of Pay 'N Pak*, which used a design that also was trying to discover more stability.

They took—we called it the Dick Tracy tail—they took it off and went to the standard, single-piece tail.

**The boat seemed to perform better.**

Well, believe it or not, when we went out to Seattle in August, we had about a 700-point lead for high points. Got some kind of screw or something in our fuel line and I don't think we ran a heat in Seattle. We left Seattle a few points behind. Almost made it up. I think at the end of the year, 1969, when the *Budweiser* won the national championship in San Diego, we weren't much over 150 points behind.

**You did win two races that year, at Madison and Tri-Cities. Do you recall anything special about those?**

No. I remember Detroit. We pulled up even with Muncey and had a problem with the nitrous. It killed the engine, and he went on to win the race. But I trailed him by about 10 or 12 boat lengths for three or four laps. Then, on the fourth lap, I pulled even with him. I had it in mind we were going to win the race. Then, all of a sudden, we had a mechanical malfunction.

**We'd like to ask you a few technical questions about the picklefork bow. They were trying to get a boat that would**

**recover if it stuffed the bow. Would that boat recover in a situation like that?**

Well, I never really stuffed it, so I couldn't tell you that it worked. But the year I drove the *Notre Dame*, in Detroit I did stuff it down by the Belle Isle Bridge, and the picklefork will definitely recover.

**Now, the picklefork on the Jones-style *Notre Dame* was quite different than what you had on the *Smirnoff*.**

Oh, yeah, I don't know whether the small picklefork on the *Smirnoff* would've worked.

**In 1970, you took over as the *Budweiser* driver. That's a boat you had driven against, so you must have had some idea of its potential.**

Yeah. When I had a chance to drive against it, Bill Sterret, Sr. was driving it. It was a Karelsen.

**Do you happen to know the circumstances whereby you became the *Miss Budweiser* driver? Was Lee [Schoenith] a little upset to lose you?**

No, I don't think so. You know, Bill Sterret retired. *Bud* needed a driver in '70. I just felt it would give me a little—you know, a chance to win a few more races. The *Budweiser* in '69 was running well. It was one of the top contenders. I

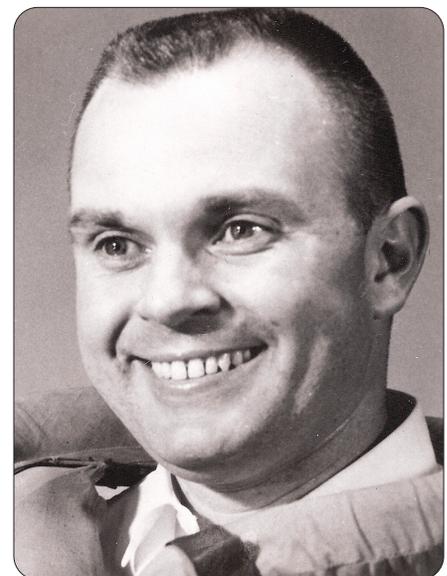
just got a little antsy, more than anything else. I wanted to be more successful in a hurry. I felt that maybe it would take us another year to work the bugs out of the *MYR*. That was the main reason. It wasn't money or a falling out with Lee or the crew.

**You saw a better personal opportunity.**

Well, I thought so at the time.

**How did the *Budweiser* hull compare to the *MYR* for driving?**

Well, it was much lighter in the front.



Hydroplane and Raceboat Museum



Tony Bugeja Collection

The MYR's Special in 1969.

The boat did like our cabovers do today—it tended to float a little easier. But it doesn't even compare, turning-wise, to the boats today.

**Did it corner better than the MYR? It had a full-length non-trip on the side.**

Yeah, it cornered better. The MYR, though, got around a corner well. It was

just that the MYR was a heavy boat, and it was hard to accelerate with.

**You started off winning with the Budweiser.**

Yeah, if you want to call it winning. That Tampa race was so rough. All the drivers went by on Monday and gave thumbs down, but they decided to run it anyway. It was just more or less a heat of survival than racing. Going down the backstretch I didn't hit over 100 at any one time.

**You wonder what the point is in running the race.**

Yeah.

**You also won in Madison that year.**

Yeah, we had a good year in Madison. The boat was running extremely well.

**Muncey was also running well with the MYR. Was he your toughest competition?**

Yeah. Bill was running real well.

**And then there was the Notre Dame.**

Yeah, Leif was doing a good job with the Notre Dame. Real good job.

**Then you had the problem at Tri-Cities. Dumped the boat. What can you tell us about that?**

Well, we don't know what caused it. We've got some guesses. Detroit had been one of those rough-water races like Detroit always is. We feel like we may have done some structural damage that you can't tell. We could have structural damage in this boat and unless you take the decking off and look down in there and inspect the sponson, there's just no way you can tell. We always felt we had something broken from that Detroit race, because it was one of the roughest ones I'd driven, water-wise. So, we feel something broke in the front, and the whole front end exploded off of it.

**One of the former crew members on that boat told us he was always afraid to watch it because he thought it was going to roll. Did you ever feel that way?**

No, not really. It never had a tendency to roll in the corner. Now, down the straightaway it was a little flighty, but it was never bad in the corners.

**You came back after the accident and won in Seattle. What kind of shape were you in, personally?**

Well, I've still got a permanent arm injury. I lost a nerve in my left bicep. It pulled out of my spinal cord. But, fortun-



Randy Hall

Dean Chenoweth joined the Miss Budweiser team in 1970 and drove the defending national champion.



Randy Hall

Chenoweth and *Miss Budweiser* drift to the dock after a test run on Lake Washington

nately my arm is developed as good as new without the left bicep. You know, the world record attempt we ran in Seattle, I've completely recovered from that. No permanent injuries. But that accident in Tri-Cities, I've got one injury I'll have to live with the rest of my life.

**You've been able to work around it, though?**

Oh, yeah, no problem.

**But at the time, you basically drove one-handed, didn't you?**

Well, no. If I'd had to push up... Fortunately, in your left arm, you always pull down. So, in driving you always use your triceps in your left arm and use the biceps in your right arm. Fortunately, without any left bicep, it didn't have a thing to do with my driving.

**You came back the next year with**

**the same boat. Had it changed? Was it different from year to year?**

No, I don't think so.

**Was the competition catching up?**

Well, the competition was catching up. We only had one propeller that would really work on that boat. You could try anything else, any prop-gear combination, and the boat just didn't run right. It was stamped the HK-10. The old

## DEAN CHENOWETH'S CAREER DRIVING STATS

YEAR	BOAT	RACE RESULTS					HEAT RESULTS						
		RACES	1st	2nd	3rd	DNQ	START	DNS	FINISH	1st	Pct.	Top 3	Pct.
1968	Smirnoff	10	0	0	1	0	26	1	20	3	0.150	17	0.850
1969	MYR's Special	7	2	3	0	0	21	1	18	10	0.556	18	1.000
1970	Miss Budweiser	8	4	1	1	0	23	0	21	13	0.619	20	0.952
1971	Miss Budweiser	9	2	1	0	0	26	1	24	11	0.458	22	0.917
1972	Notre Dame	4	0	1	0	0	9	1	7	1	0.143	5	0.714
1973	Miss Budweiser	9	4	4	0	0	28	0	26	17	0.654	24	0.923
1974	Miss Budweiser	3	1	2	0	0	9	0	9	4	0.444	9	1.000
1979	Miss Budweiser	6	0	2	1	0	17	1	13	5	0.385	13	1.000
1980	Miss Budweiser	8	5	1	0	1	23	1	23	22	0.957	23	1.000
1981	Miss Budweiser	8	6	1	0	0	23	0	22	21	0.955	22	1.000
1982	Miss Budweiser	6	1	1	1	1	13	1	10	6	0.600	8	0.800
	<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>218</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>193</b>	<b>113</b>	<b>0.585</b>	<b>181</b>	<b>0.938</b>

crew and I, when we see each other, we refer back to the HK-10.

**By '71, Muncey had a new boat. *Pride of Pay 'N Pak* had been turned around. Schumacher was driving that, and he won the last three. McCormick won a couple. Did you see a trend at that time?**

No. In '73 I could see a trend coming in. But not in '71 or '72, I couldn't.

**By the end of the '71 season, it seemed the *Budweiser* was not as fast as some of the others, like the *Pay 'N Pak*. Would you agree with that?**

Well, going back to '71, it's kind of hard to remember. But, we weren't running nearly as well. I remember the '70 season, some of the good parts of '71, and I remember the '73 season. But '71 is just kind of vague.

**In '71 they ran Miami for the first race. What was your impression of Miami?**

I like Miami. I think you have to be a little sharper. You just don't go into the first turn as hard as you normally do, and you go in with your eyes open—more aware of what can happen, let's put it that way.

**In '72 you traded teams and drove for Shirley McDonald. Can you tell us why you changed?**

Well, we hadn't done much with the *Budweiser*. It [*Notre Dame*] was a Ron Jones boat. I've always liked to take on new projects. I think that's the main reason I came out of retirement last year to drive the *Budweiser* again. It was something new

and radical and they were trying new things. I think that's one of the biggest things in my decision.

**How did that boat handle compared with the *Budweiser* or the *MYR*?**

Well, they had some problems, I think. These were some of the first Unlimiteds he [Ron Jones] built. That boat, I don't think anyone got the bugs out of it. I know Bernie ended up with it. I think there was just something wrong in the construction of it because they changed sponsons, they'd done everything. The boat never did work out.

**Did it corner differently?**

Yeah, we could never get it to turn like the rest of the boats. You know, we tried different skid fins, we put it here, put it there. We even changed it as far as the CG [Center of Gravity] goes, down inside the boat. It just never worked.

**You only drove it in three races.**

Yeah, that's when we stuffed it in a turn.

**Blew the sponson off in Detroit. Big photo in the newspaper as it happened.**

Yeah. It was that famous four-foot ground roller down by the Belle Isle Bridge. I went right off the end of it.

**When the boat came back at Seattle, was it any different? Had they been able to do anything to it?**

Not really. I think it was some place in the bottom. I think it was where they put the break in the bottom. I don't think it had anything to do with

**"I think there was just something wrong in the construction of it because they changed sponsons, they'd done everything. The boat never did work out."**

Chenoweth moved to the *Notre Dame* in 1972 and drove the team's new Ron Jones boat.



Randy Hall



Randy Hall

Chenoweth returned to the *Budweiser* team in 1973 to drive a former *Pay 'n Pak* boat that team owner Bernie Little had purchased the previous off-season.

the sponsons, or CG, or strut weight, or anything like that. It was somewhere in construction.

**In '73 you came back to drive for Bernie. He had the old *Pay 'n Pak*. Now, that must have been a little different experience for you.**

It was. That was a fun year. The boat would go around the corner. It went down the straightaway real good. But again, compared to the models we're driving now, it was even a little bit heavy. But, I remember when I drove against Mickey in the *Pay 'n Pak*. It was probably 700 or 800 pounds lighter than we were. They had all kinds of acceleration. But we had good chute speed, so it made for a good race.

**Did you have to change your driving technique at all to handle that *Miss Budweiser*?**

Not much.

**Were they really hanging it on the skid fin like they're doing now?**

Not nearly as much as they're doing now. They were hanging it on the skid fin, but not to the extent they are today.

**The race we really want to talk about is *Seafair*, the race in the rain.**

Yeah. I remember you couldn't see

from one end of the racecourse to the other. I was on the inside and I followed the buoys down. You could see about two buoys in front of you. I always looked for the green buoy. Then we'd know when to set up.

**It must've been an exciting race for you.**

Oh, yeah, probably the most exciting race I've ever driven. You know, in 1973, to average almost 123 miles an hour in competition was pretty good. The reason we did so well that day was the water. Lake Washington stayed smooth. We

didn't have any wind to contend with. All we had was chop.

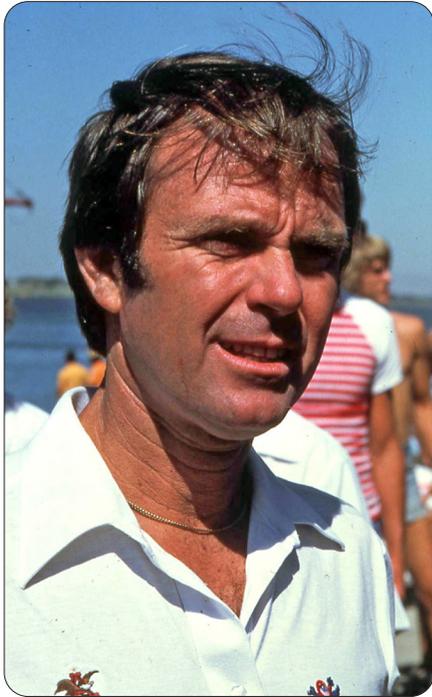
**Then you retired, but came back in 1974 when Howie Benns was hurt. What was the reason for your retirement? Is that what you really wanted to do?**

Well, no, it wasn't what I wanted to do. I love the sport so much I didn't want to retire. But when I got the Budweiser distributorship in Tallahassee—I'd been in the automobile business all my life—the brewery people and myself thought it would be best. We needed to build a new warehouse and a lot of trucks need-



Claudia Cole

Chenoweth in *Budweiser* battles deck-to-deck with Mickey Remund in *Pay 'n Pak* during an exciting 1973 World's Championship race in Seattle



Tony Bugeja Collection

was the last race of the year. When we raced out in San Diego, I led the *Pay 'n Pak* for three laps, and he was coming up pretty well on the fourth lap. It was going to be a close race to the finish. Just after we got the green flag, the quill shaft went on the supercharger. So, we lost that race. Then we came to Madison and had a little problem with the boat. The final race in Jacksonville we won going away. To have to go back into retirement, I guess you can't go back any better than that.

**How did it feel to get back into racing in 1979?**

Oh, after I once got my feel down last year, we got some good propeller/gear-ratio combinations, I found I like

these new boats much better than the other boats. I guess it's the same way with anything new—you learn by design. These new boats are just such a dream to drive. I never thought a cabover would be that way. I was always a little apprehensive of the cabover, but I'll tell you, after driving one, I think you have more feel of what the boat's doing than you do in the old conventional boat.

**Compared to the old style boats, what was different about the first Griffon-powered *Budweiser*, in terms of driving?**

Turn like a bomb! The way they got these cabovers set up, they just go right on around a corner.

ed to be replaced. With all that to do, and being new in the beer business, it was almost impossible to travel three months out of the year like we do and stay on top of the business and get everything replaced that needed to be done.

**Was it a problem for you to come back in '74 for three races?**

No, not really. I don't think you lose that much. I was probably a little bit rusty the first start or two in San Diego, but once I had a couple hours in the boat I was all right.

**Any problem with the brewery?**

Oh, no.

**You were always at Miami and occasionally some of the other races. Was that tough for you?**

Yeah, it was always tough. That's why I only went to a race or two a year. It's kind of hard to stand on the bank and watch everybody and not be able to race. So, I'd just kind of stay away.

**What do you recall from Jacksonville in 1974?**

That was a short course and rough water.

**Anything special about your victory there?**

Oh, yeah, it meant a lot because it



Hydroplane and Raceboat Museum



Sandy Ross Collection

**TOP:** Chenoweth came out of retirement in 1979 to drive a new *Miss Budweiser* that featured several design innovations and the power of a Rolls-Royce Griffon engine.

**ABOVE:** The *Budweiser* crew helps lower their boat's gigantic engine into position.



Photos by Cary Tolman/Seattle Post-Intelligencer

The 1979 *Miss Budweiser* was destroyed while Chenoweth was attempting to set a world's straightaway speed record on Lake Washington. This sequence of photos shows the boat doing a backward flip and then tossing Chenoweth from the cockpit when it hit the water.

**Griffon engines. Anything drastically different in handling them?**

Well, the first set-up we had with prop-gear ratios was just awful off the corners. It was terrible. We had quite a few problems trying to work out props and gears. Then, when we got a prop that would go like hell, the boat would handle terribly. Like in Tri-Cities, we were going like a bomb, but that boat was all over the water. Getting two and three feet high off the water, off the sponsons. When we'd get the right wheel on it to make it lay down, we weren't competitive. So, we just had some problems that had to be worked out.

**You seemed to change your starting technique. You could approach the line much more slowly than other drivers and accelerate quickly and still be competitive.**

Well, I tried not to do it. Sometimes we just went in early, not because we wanted to, just because the competition made us all do it. And I just think, when we got the right wheel on it, it did accelerate real well. So, if we got snookered in a little ahead, it didn't bother me that much.

**Could you describe some of the other changes they had to make to the '79 boat?**

Oh, mainly the biggest thing we had to do, before we made the record run, was detune the sponsons—take some of the angle of attack out of 'em. When we got up to the higher speeds and we started running really good last year, we thought maybe the angle of attack was a little bit too severe, and that kicked it off. Started sponson walking.

**They changed 'em at Seafair, then they changed 'em back again.**

Well, what we did at Seafair didn't seem to help it that much. But what they did at San Diego and the world record run did make a difference. But, what they did, I don't know, because I never had a chance to ask 'em.

**You and Bill Muncey had a frightening experience at Ogden in '79. He went**



Chenoweth was back in the cockpit of a new Griffon-powered *Miss Budweiser* in 1980.

**over your roostertail and nearly flipped while dicing for the inside lane.**

Really, I never thought too much about it. I don't know why Bill ran over the buoy into my roostertail, because that's just a tactic we all use. Once we've established that lane and we see someone coming from the infield to try to take it away, we just run up to the buoy line, where you have to go around the corner. He has to drop back into another lane. Apparently, Bill didn't do it. He just went over the buoy, over my roostertail. I never could figure out why he did it. In San Diego, Chip Hanauer and I were vying for the inside lane and the same thing happened to me there. Oh! Chip outsmarted me. When he saw me coming up on the infield, he just went for the entrance pin. I said, "Oh, oh, Chip done nailed me on this one. I'm gonna have to go to the number two lane." I didn't go over a buoy or a roostertail trying to establish a lane. I just thought, "Chip, you got it and it's yours." So, I dropped to the number two lane. I felt I outsnookered Muncey in Ogden, and why he did what he did, I've never figured out yet.

**The '79 boat was obviously heavier than the '80 hull. It had some things in the sponsons and in the design of the boat that were perhaps a little more radical than they should have been. You've**

**come back a little closer to the other boats with the new one—the running surfaces.**

To be very honest with you, I haven't been too much into this part of it. Dave Culley, Ron Jones, and Loren [Sawyer] have been mainly involved with that. I try to do the propeller and gear ratio. They tell me what gears they'd like to run, and I work my own propeller combination. I guess I'm more or less responsible for the propellers, and they're more or less responsible for the design of the

boat.

**Would you agree that the '80 boat is faster than the '79 boat?**

Ah, yeah, it's faster in the sense that you can run it faster and it doesn't take off like last year's boat. It doesn't do all that sponson walking. Now, I saw the same thing on the speedometer with last year's boat. The only difference is when I get into a little choppy water, last year's boat would start getting radical and want to take off. This new boat doesn't do that.

**Do you think you could have won**



A publicity photo of Chenoweth and his new *Miss Budweiser*.



Hydroplane and Raceboat Museum

Dean Chenoweth is shown here driving the Miss Budweiser at Detroit in 1981. He was killed the next season when the boat flipped during a qualifying attempt on the Columbia River at the Tri-Cities.

**"I love boat racing. Always have. It's always been good, and I've always loved to work with new boats and designs."**

**wit the '79 boat like you have with the '80 boat?**

That would be hard to say. I doubt it. I think this new boat, being lighter and more stable on the running surfaces, on competition water... If I had to say from a personal observation, I'd say this boat is superior to last year's boat.

**How about the record run? You were starting to prepare for that, we've been told, as far back as Kansas? The middle of July?**

Yeah.

**What did you do to prepare yourself?**

Well, I just had to psych myself into the fact that I wanted to do it. I was kind of apprehensive all along about doing it, because I know what a boat can do at 170, 175, 180. I learned a lot from the record run. I learned that up to 170 or 175, if one of 'em hits a wake and starts sponson walking, your chances of getting it back under control are good. But once you cross that 180 mark, it's tough. And then, as you could see, as I proved on that record run, once you're over 200, you're not driving the boat. The boat's driving you. You have no control whatsoever. None.

**You can't even alter the wheel?**

No.

**All you're doing is holding it and...**

Just holding it and guiding it straight.

**Did you do anything extra for your physical conditioning?**

No, not really. Just the same as I've always done.

**Back to in the '60s and early '70s, the hulls they were running at that time were being pushed to their design limits. The new boats have**

**obviously gone a step further. Are they anywhere close to their design limits? How much further can they go?**

Well, I don't know. I think if you get much faster than what we're doing down the straight-aways, you're definitely going to have to keep 'em more on the water. I don't know, I guess we're going to have to work more with spoilers and things like that to kill the lift. It's just, you know, the faster you go, the less lift you want. Once any of that boat gets up in the air, the faster you're going, the harder it is to get back under control. So, I guess the proper word is, we'll have to glue 'em down a little more.

**Cornering? They can still go faster?**

I would say so. I don't know what their limit is before they would spin out. Again, it could be a redesign of the sponson, or even maybe making 'em a little wider.

**They seem to be going wider all the time.**

Yeah.

**What motivates you? You like to succeed, obviously...**

Oh, I don't know. I love boat racing. Always have. It's always been good, and I've always loved to work with new boats and designs. The present crew that I'm working with, you couldn't ask for a finer bunch of guys. Everybody is lookin' for the same end result, and that's making the boat run and ride and go fast and win as many as we can. It's very easy to work with a crew like that.

**Who do you like to race against?**

Oh, they're all good. I like to race with Chip. I like to race with Muncey. I like to race with Steve

Reynolds, Milner Irvin. They're all a super bunch of guys to race with.

**Is there anyone who is more fun to race against?**

No, because they're all tough.

**One who challenges you more?**

Well, Milner. Now, he's at a little disadvantage. It's pretty obvious he doesn't have the equipment. But you take the *Squire* boat and you take Muncey's boat, and you take Steve, and you put 'em in a

bag and shake 'em up, they'd all come out about the same, as far as I'm concerned.

**Another driver recently told us that, in terms of straightaway speed, he used to see faster times years ago than he does now. Do you find that to be true, also?**

Of the boats I've driven, I'll be very honest with you, I'm going as fast now, or faster, than I've ever gone. I think they're as fast or faster.

**Is there anything you fear on a race-course?**

I think the worst thing on a race-course is these big, long ground swells. I think they'll take a boat off and they'll do more damage quicker than anything else. That's why we have to get 'em riding actually higher and freer in rough-water groundswells than we do on a lake or something of that type.

**Editor's Note:** *A month after the above interview, the new Budweiser lost its rudder and went airborne during a qualifying run at Seattle and was heavily damaged. Chenoweth suffered three broken ribs and a broken shoulder. He returned to action at San Diego later in the 1980 season, where he drove a replacement Miss Budweiser boat that once raced as Notre Dame—the same hull he drove in 1972. Craig Fjarlie caught up with Chenoweth again after he'd taken the boat onto the Mission Bay course for the first time.*

**How did it feel getting back into a boat today?**

Oh, it felt good. Just a little funny getting back in the kind of boat I got into. You know, I haven't been in one of those in seven or eight years. Getting back after five years, and getting into a cabover and getting used to it, and then getting into a conventional felt real funny.

**How did the boat compare to the way it was when it was Notre Dame? Any noticeable changes?**

To be very honest with you, I don't remember that far back. I imagine I could recollect after I drive the boat for awhile. But, you know, I spent so much time working on this cabover the last two years, it's just... Everything with this cabover has more or less stuck in my mind and it's hard to go back farther than that.

**To you, what are the biggest differences in the two styles of boats?**

I just could never believe that a cabover is that much superior to a conventional. I had my doubts about driving a cabover, then after I got used to it, and now getting back into this conventional, a cabover is just so much easier to drive and handle and react to. It's just unbelievable.

**Will you tell us briefly about the last accident? We understand you were conscious during the whole thing.**

Yeah, I just remember completely losing control when the rudder came off. I knew I was in trouble. It took about two or three seconds for the boat to start to veer left because of the big outside skid fin. Then when it did, I remember the barrel rolls. Then I just remember going out of the boat and seeing the boat sail over my head.

**That must have been frightening.**

It was pretty hairy!

**And you feel good? Fully recovered?**

Oh, yeah. I've got one spot in my rib cage that's tender, but hell, most people have that for four, five, or six months. That was mainly because I put a rib strap on. It just kind of tightened 'em up. Now, I've taken it off, it doesn't hurt. It was just to hold 'em in place in case they weren't completely healed, but I'm convinced they are.

**You're driving with that on?**

Yeah, I just tried it.

**Any other protective gear?**

Nothing. This is it, just an elastic band. That's all it is.

**Good to have you back.**

Thank you! ❖

*Before the accident in Seattle, Dean Chenoweth had won the first five races of the 1980 season and earned enough points to win the national championship. The Griffon-powered Miss Budweiser was then repaired for the 1981 season and, with Chenoweth again at the wheel, won six of the year's eight races and another title. But then tragedy struck. Chenoweth was killed on July 31, 1982, when Miss Budweiser flipped during a qualifying run on the Columbia River at the Tri-Cities. During his career, he won a total of 25 races, which puts him fourth among all drivers in the sport's history, an achievement that was tied by Jimmy Shane this past season. Chenoweth also won four Gold Cup races and four national titles during his distinguished career.*

# Racing in the Motor City from a fan's perspective.

BY ROGER SCHAAF

**M**y earliest memory would have to be in 1976 when Tom D'Eath won the Gold Cup in the *Miss U.S.* I was not there, but remember the race because D'Eath was from Fair Haven; I grew up in St. Clair. I always wanted to go, but never had the opportunity attend.

In 1982, I finally saw my first race. The Gold Cup. Epic battle between Chip in the *Atlas* and Dean in the *Budweiser*. The fans were excited, I was excited, and it was emotional. There were lots of tears. Being a new fan of the hydros, I didn't quite understand the emotions of the win and the whole Bill Muncey story. After that weekend, it's safe to say that I was hooked.

My newly found obsession led me to travel to other race sites to watch the big boats. Those race sites were Detroit, Evansville, Madison (two times), Seattle, Barrie, ON, and St. Clair. In my 40 years of being a fan, the trips created many memories. I even volunteered at the U-13 shop in Detroit. Also had the



Photo provided by the author

The Detroit hydro buddies get photo bombed by a well-known driver

opportunity to meet many vintage and current drivers.

The best part of going to the races is the friendships that I made over the years. Each year in Detroit, we would park in the Waterworks Park lot located behind the pits and grandstands. We would set two or three pop-up tents,

camp chairs, and coolers within reach. We affectionately called it "The Hydro Compound"! Everyone was welcome to stop by for some shade, a beverage, stunning conversation, and create new memories.

The Compound had some high-profile visitors like Fred Farley, Jimmy Shane, Bruce Lowe, and our in-house celebrity Craig Barney. Met some great folks from Madison, Seattle, and other areas of the U.S. It became the highlight of the weekend to hang out with such great people.

Enter social media. As much as social media can be a pain in the backside, it has allowed fans to connect and support hydroplane racing. Most of my social media contacts are racing fans, some of the drivers and their families, and voices of hydro racing. More than "just" a fan.

I really hope that the Detroit race happens this summer. I miss my friends and hanging around The Hydro Compound. ❖



Photo provided by the author

A gathering in "The Hydro Compound"

# HERITAGE

## Historical Perspective by Craig Fjarlie



### The Long Road Home

When I finished my undergraduate college degree, one of my professors strongly encouraged me to go on to graduate school. I was a psychology major, and it was widely known that a graduate degree was necessary to obtain work in that field. I applied to several universities and was admitted to the graduate program at North Texas State University, in Denton, Texas. The school has since been renamed the University of North Texas. Denton is just north of the Dallas-Fort Worth airport. In fact, ground was broken for the airport when I was a student there.

I drove my car to Denton and that afforded me the opportunity to attend the 1971 race on Lake Dallas. When I stayed in Texas during the summer of 1972, I was able to drive to Owensboro and see a race on the Ohio River for the first time.

One year I had a roommate who was into Formula 1 racing. He would talk with me about Formula 1, and I would talk with him about hydroplanes. It worked well for both of us. North Texas had a reputation as a good music school, and a number of groups included the campus as a stop on their college tour. Concerts I attended included the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band, the Earl Scruggs Revue, and Michael Murphey. Since leaving Texas I have never again eaten chicken fried steak, but I did learn to like black eyed peas.

I was on track to finish my master's degree in May 1973. Somehow, I obtained Bob Fendler's mailing address. A few weeks before my major advisor signed off on my thesis, I wrote to Fendler and explained that I would be driving back to Seattle. I asked if I could stop in Phoenix and visit his boat shop. He sent a reply a few days later, approving a visit.

He included directions to his shop. I guarded the letter carefully.

I loaded my 1964 Volkswagen beetle and set out for Seattle. Rather than going north through Lubbock and Amarillo, I went west, across New Mexico to Phoenix. It meant a longer trip, but worth it to see Fendler's shop, where the U-29 *Lincoln Thrift 7-1/4% Special* was being prepared for the first race in Miami. I followed the directions on Fendler's letter and found the shop without becoming lost.

I parked the car and, holding the letter, walked to the open shop door. One of the crewmembers met me at the door. I showed him the letter, which he read, then handed it back to me. "Okay, come in, but keep your hands in your pockets," he said. I walked around the shop, observing the work being done. I was careful to avoid getting into anyone's way.

I had to continue driving, so the visit lasted about a half-hour, but I was pleased that I had been able to visit a shop few other fans had seen. I noted especially that the crew seemed upbeat about the approaching season. It was justified when Gene Whipp drove the boat to victory in the President's Cup.

I continued on my way to Seattle. I went through San Francisco and crossed the Golden Gate bridge for the first time. I stopped for one night in Eureka, California, to visit an aunt. I was home a few days before the Miami race, which was my goal.

I had been on a long drive that at times was lonely and grueling, but I saw parts of the country I'd never seen before. I also gained an appreciation for boat crews who drive their haulers from one race to the next. That trip was almost exactly 50 years ago, and I wish I knew where those years have gone. ❖



Bob Fendler's *Lincoln Thrift's 7-1/4% Special* in 1973.

# HYDROFILE

## Race Team News by Lon Erickson



### Go3 Racing

With the major hull repairs completed, Ed Cooper is now busy in the engine room at Go3 Racing. Here are a few photos of the disassembled Allison V-12s.



Photos from Go3 Racing

### U-8/U-9 Strong Racing

Jeff and Mike Campbell, along with the crew, continue with the rebuild of Corey Peabody's U-9 hull. The U-8 is also receiving updates to its sponsons, among other changes.



Photos from Strong Racing

### U-27 Wiggins Racing

Charley Wiggins shared that Dave Villwock has joined Wiggins Racing for 2023. The primary goal is the completion of the U-27 that has been under construction in the Alabama shop.



Wiggins Racing

# MY \$0.02 WORTH

## Editorial Comment by Andy Muntz



**T**wo years ago, the H1 Board of Directors agreed to a long-range vision for the future of the sport that included an expectation for how unlimited hydroplane racing would be perceived by the public. Before that, the board also adopted a mission statement for the sport: “To maintain, improve, and expand the sport of unlimited hydroplane racing, while being ever mindful of enhancing the fan experience.”

The volunteers who handle the communications and publicity for the sport have been moving forward since those ideas were established to make those goals a reality. Since the close of the 2022 season, a large group has been working hard to put those concepts into action. I’ve been privileged to be a part of those discussions, so thought I’d pass along a little about what’s been going on.

The long-range vision established an expectation that the sport will be perceived by the public “as entertaining and professional. Fans will walk away from races feeling they have seen an event that was fast, exciting, and fun.”

The plan outlined several challenges that the sport must face to get there, including a rework of the financial structure of the sport, solving conditions that inhibit growth, and gaining the support of those who are involved in the sport.

There also were two challenges closely related to communications: improve the public’s perception of the sport and enhance the fan experience. The plan then listed a total of 36 action steps in response to those challenges. Ten of those action steps addressed public perception and five addressed the fan experience.

The communicator group looked at those action steps, plus action steps connected to other challenges, during a series of meetings this winter and has developed a plan of specific tasks for improving H1’s marketing and communications effort. That proposal has been presented to the H1 board and is currently being discussed for approval.

The group’s proposal calls for H1 Unlimited’s communications and marketing work to take place within eight subcommittees that will each focus on

a key area of the overall plan.

A promotions and advertising work group would organize fan clubs and oversee promotional activities, for instance. There also would be a print media group to post news and develop written material; a social media group to handle posts on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter; and a website group to work on the H1 website and mobile app.

The proposal also includes a community initiatives group, a coordinated effort between race team publicity experts as well as between race site publicists, and a merchandise group that would look into offering an online store that sells souvenirs, apparel, and other collectibles to race fans. Finally, a strategy work group would develop new ideas and review the results of past efforts.

The details of these strategies are coming together. If all goes well, you should start seeing changes in the near future. I’ll continue to keep you posted as this effort begins to materialize. ❖

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

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Check our website for more information.