



NOVEMBER 2025

Another successful Bayfair with wins for Kelly and Tate



Robert Peters

Andrew Tate in *Miss Goodman Real Estate* (left) races on San Diego's Mission Bay side by side with J. Michael Kelly in *Beacon Electric*.

BY MAC CLOUSE

Last year, Bayfair returned from a one-year absence with a race that had battles for the Gold Cup and the National High Points Championship and several other classes of racing. The event was successful, and fans were happy to have Bayfair back. This year, the Unlimiteds battled for the Bill Muncey Cup and the National High Points Championship, and again

there were several other classes of racing. While the boat counts were down, the weekend was still entertaining.

With a new title sponsor, this year's event was the San Diego Bayfair presented by Samson Rope. What didn't change was the National High Points Champion, as Andrew Tate won again in the *Miss Goodman Real Estate*. J. Michael Kelly won the Bill Muncey Cup driving *Beacon*

Electric in a final heat that was the best race of the weekend and the season. It was Tate's third national championship and Kelly's fourth Bill Muncey Cup win. Kelly's "strong" performance in the final enabled Strong Racing to prevent a season sweep of wins by BWR Racing.

This was also the first race since the unexpected passing of H1 photographer Chris Denslow. His large presence with

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Robert Peters



Robert Peters



Robert Peters



TOP: During the second lap of Heat One, *Beacon Plumbing* slid into the roostertail left by *Miss Apollo* and flipped. Driver Corey Peabody was not injured but the boat was done for the weekend.

MIDDLE: Jamie Nilsen in *Miss FLAV-R-PAC* leads J. Michael Kelly and *Beacon Electric* down the front stretch past the spectators on Fiesta Island. **ABOVE:** Dave Villwock in *Miss Apollo* holds a lead over Andrew Tate in *Miss Goodman Real Estate*.

his floppy green hat and many cameras was missed by his hydroplane family. RIP, Chris.

FRIDAY

The five boats in the pits were U-8 *Beacon Electric* (J. Michael Kelly), U-9 *Beacon Plumbing* (Corey Peabody), U-11 *Miss FLAV-R-PAC* (Jamie Nilsen), U-27 *Miss Apollo* (Dave Villwock), and U-91 *Miss Goodman Real Estate* (Andrew Tate). The schedule had testing from 10:15 to 11 a.m. and qualifying at 1:45 p.m. Like last year, the racing would be a round robin format. There would be five heats with each boat in only four of the heats. No heat would be the same. All five boats would be in the final. Each heat would be three laps with a five-lap final.

Testing: The weather all weekend was good. Temperatures were in the low 70s. Morning clouds burned off by the afternoon and there was usually a light breeze in the afternoon. All the boats tested. The fastest legal speed was a 162.604 mph by *Apollo*. *Goodman* had a speed over 165 mph, but both of Tate's runs were not recorded due to fuel-flow violations. While testing, Tate ran some laps in lane six. "I have no plan to be in lane six, but you have to be prepared," he explained.

Qualifying: The first boat to qualify was *FLAV-R-PAC* with Nilsen at 148.233 mph. Villwock in *Apollo* did 159.546 mph. *Beacon Plumbing* with Peabody then did 160.476 mph. Kelly then did a 159.591 mph. Tate ended the first round with a 163.666 mph.

In Round 2, Villwock increased *Apollo's* speed to 161.783 mph and Peabody increased *Beacon Plumbing's* speed to 160.702 mph. Kelly took *Beacon Electric* out, but compressor stalling caused him to return to the pits before completing a lap.

Notes and quotes from the pits

BY MAC CLOUSE

Darrell Strong:

For this year, I would give us a grade of A-. We needed a good final exam because we had a C going into this race. The win here was a good final. This win was a cherry on top of a not-so-good season.

Jim Sechler, the new crew chief for the Strong Racing team:

"This was a great way to end my first weekend. We are happy with the changes we made to the Eight. Things went our way. I am grateful to Darrell, Vanessa, and Corey for giving me this opportunity. My background is in engineering, and my management style is to let people do their job. I live in Michigan and fly to Seattle two days per month to work on the boats."

Dave Villwock's move:

The longtime Seattle-area resident moved to La Grange, Indiana, in December. "I decided there were too many negative things going on with Seattle, so I moved. Not long after that, I got a call from Bruce Ratchford who said he was looking at buying a boat. We talked a lot about it, and he ended up buying the Madison team. I make a lot of trips to Seattle and stay a couple of weeks each time to work on the boat."

Chris Denslow's bird:

Anyone who was a Facebook friend of Chris saw posts with him and his bird Beano. With the sad passing of Chris, Beano needed a new home. He has been "adopted" by former driver Nate Brown, who has an aviary at his home.

Jeff Bernard:

"As of now, we think the U-12 *Graham Trucking* and I will run the full season next year. We had fun in Seattle. The final didn't go well, but that's boat racing. This has been a bittersweet weekend for me. I won all four of my heats in the GP *Bad Influence*, and we won the national championship, but the boat has been sold and will be with a different team and driver next year."

Kip Brown:

Former driver Kip Brown was in the pits as a crew chief for his 16-year-old daughter Katie and her 1-liter boat. "I haven't driven the boat. I wouldn't fit in the cockpit now, but it used to belong to Jon Zimmerman, so it can be

fitted for a big guy. But I don't want to drive. I get as much of a charge being a crew chief. I give Katie lots of advice, and any mistakes don't happen twice, which is what you want. I always hoped to be a crew chief for one of my kids. Katie raced outboards for two years and has now raced an inboard for the last four years."

Walt Ottenad, in charge of H1 onboard videos with the Go Pro cameras:

Walt was recently recognized by Go Pro because of his designing and production of an aerodynamic housing that protects the Go Pro cameras that he attaches to the boats. All of us fans have enjoyed the many videos that he has posted that give us perspectives we have never seen. The housing is ultra strong and protects the cameras in case of accidents and wash downs. "I have been doing this since 2011. I estimate that I have lost 75 to 80 cameras that are at the bottoms of many racecourses. The cameras are important to us because we can't see what happens unless you have a camera. It is nice to see Go Pro publicizing what we are doing. They have lots more viewers than we do so it is good for our sport." Thanks to Walt for all the great work he does for H1.

Charlie Grooms:

"I am working on BWR Racing's plan for next year. It will require additional invested dollars and includes the possibility of running a third boat, the Wiggins/*Apollo* hull. We'll see what Bruce says. We are also doing a lot more with analytics. We use the data that Jimmy Gilbert provides and work with Mike Noonan to get better performance. We can analyze the boat's performance in the turns and the straightaways to see what we and our drivers can do to improve. We are also working with the drivers to pay more attention to the N2 lights to see when they can speed up or need to slow down. This was something that Jimmy Shane could do really well."

Shannon Raney:

"The U-11 team set a record here this weekend that will never be broken. We did an engine change after each time we went out on the water. The crew did a lot of work over the weekend!"

Bruce Ratchford:

"What has surprised me the most about this year is how well the team has gotten along and how well we have done

Notes and quotes from the pits (con't)

at keeping the boats and the team at the same professional level. My family has joined the hydroplane family. I am okay with anyone winning this weekend. The five boats we have here can all win, and we can be okay with just five boats.”

A safe race:

The Bayfair event has a large number of boats participating. Fortunately, the *Beacon Plumbing* accident was the only accident during the weekend, and fortunately, Corey was not hurt. ❖

SATURDAY

The schedule for Saturday had testing at 8:50 a.m., Heat One at 10:50 a.m., Heat Two at 12:35 p.m., and Heat Three at 4 p.m. All five boats tested and Tate showed that he was ready to possibly dominate with a lap of 164.269 mph. “The water this morning was much better than what we had for qualifying. Now I just have to wait a while for our weekend to start because we are not in Heat One,” he said.

Heat One: Villwock started in lane four, but he led Peabody at the end of lap one. Kelly and Nilsen trailed. Entering turn one of lap two, *Beacon Plumbing* hit some rollers and bounced twice. Each time, the skid fin came out of the water. The boat then slid into *Apollo's* roostertail, rode up the roostertail, and flipped with some twists. The boat ended up upside down. Peabody was able to crawl out through the escape hatch in the bottom,

and he was not hurt. He was quickly released from the medical center and was back in the pits.

“I’m fine,” said Peabody. “I hit some rollers, went up and back down, and then up and over.” Owner Darrell Strong said, “The damage is not as bad as I thought it might be, but we did lose an engine.” The damage was too severe for the boat to continue and they withdrew.

Heat Two: This heat was a mess for the fans. The PA system was playing the audio from the YouTube streaming. Unfortunately, it was not in sync with what was happening on the water. The score-up procedure confuses many fans, and now things were even worse. Most of us had no idea when the racing started, and most of us thought there was still one lap left when the boats actually did finish.

The heat showed that *Beacon Electric* could beat *Goodman* if Kelly got lane one. He was in lane one with Tate in lane

two. Villwock backed off after the start. “I got too close to Andrew at the start, and I didn’t want anything bad to happen, so I backed off and just had a Saturday-afternoon cruise.” The finish was Kelly first, Tate second, and Villwock third.

Heat Three: This heat was predictable. Villwock was not going to do anything to prevent Tate from getting the 400 points in his pursuit of the national championship. Tate led wire to wire from lane one to win easily. Villwock started in lane three and stayed wide for all three laps to get second, and Nilsen finished third.

SUNDAY

The schedule for Sunday had the rerun of Heat One at 9 a.m., Heat Four at 11:10 a.m., Heat Five at 1:30 p.m., and the final at 3:40 p.m.

Heat One rerun: This heat had *Beacon Electric*, *Apollo*, and *FLAV-R-PAC*. From lane one, Kelly led Villwock by about a roostertail through the first two laps. Then Villwock backed off in lap three. Kelly finished first, Villwock second, and Nilsen third. Kelly’s win meant that the battle for the High Points Championship was between him and Tate.

Villwock explained his decision in the heat. “I wasn’t gaining on Kelly, so I decided to go wide, back off, and stay out of the spray. No reason to have anything bad happen. You can’t win the final unless you are in it.”

Tate talked about his strategy for the rest of the day. “Win each heat and go home. We have no rules about restricting Dave in heats with me. That would be no fun if there were.”



Robert Peters

Beacon Electric ingested too much salt water at the outset of Heat Four and its engine died, allowing Andrew Tate and *Miss Goodman Real Estate* an easy victory.

Heat Four: Going into Heat Four, Tate's "magic number" to win the national championship was 837. Any combination of points Tate would get and points Kelly would not get that totaled 837 would mean that Tate would win the title. This heat with *Beacon Electric*, *Goodman*, and *FLAV-R-PAC* would likely be a head-to-head matchup between Tate and Kelly.

Tate and Kelly were side-by-side going slow for much of the milling period. *Beacon* died in the backstretch before the start, a victim of too much salt. Tate said, "As we were going slow, I could see water going to the sides of my boat, but I saw it going up over the front of *Beacon*, which gave it too much salt. He was going too slow." That was only part of Kelly's problem. He also had no computer, no dials, and no radio.

Tate was the easy winner with Nilsen in second. Nilsen also had salt problems. *FLAV-R-PAC* died in the backstretch after finishing and trying to return to the pits. The combination of Tate getting 400 points and Kelly not getting 400 points meant that Tate's magic number was now 37.

Heat Five: When Tate was asked how he could get 37 points in this heat to win the points championship, he answered, "Finish."

Beacon Electric was in lane one, *Apollo* was in lane two, *FLAV-R-PAC* was in lane three, and *Goodman* was in lane four. Tate was first to the start line, but Villwock and Kelly used the inside to be in first and second at the end of lap one. Tate was in third ahead of Nilsen.

In turn one for lap two, *Beacon Electric* went up on its left side and almost went over. Kelly then fell behind. Tate passed Villwock in lap two, and he and Villwock stayed close for the rest of the heat with Tate finishing first on the outside. Kelly finished third with Nilsen in fourth. After the heat, it was announced that Villwock received a one-minute penalty for encroaching on Kelly in turn one of lap two. This moved Kelly to second,

STATBOX

San Diego Bayfair

Powered by Samson Rope (Bill Muncey Cup)

San Diego, California; September 13-14, 2025
2.5-mile course on Mission Bay; 42.5-mile race

QUALIFYING: (1) U-91 *Miss Goodman Real Estate* (#1801), Andrew Tate, 163.666, 100 points; (2) U-27 *Miss Apollo* (#0706), Dave Villwock, 161.783, 80; (3) U-9 *Beacon Plumbing* (#92102), Corey Peabody, 160.702, 70; (4) U-8 *Beacon Electric* (#1496), J. Michael Kelly, 159.951, 60; (5) U-11 *Miss FLAV-R-PAC* (#0925), Jamie Nilsen, 148.233, 50.

HEAT 1: Heat stopped when *Beacon Plumbing* flipped in the first turn of the second lap.

HEAT 2: (1) *Beacon Electric* 156.872 mph, 400 pts., 460 cumulative pts.; (2) *Miss Goodman Real Estate* 155.883, 300, 400; (3) *Miss Apollo* 125.390, 225, 305; *Beacon Plumbing* DNS – hull damage from flip in heat 1, 0, 70. Fast lap: (3) *Beacon Electric* 157.543.

HEAT 3: (1) *Miss Goodman Real Estate* 152.409, 400, 800. (2) *Miss Apollo* 146.228, 300, 605; (3) *Miss FLAV-R-PAC* 142.708, 225, 275; *Beacon Plumbing* W/D – damage from flip in heat 1, 0, 70. Fast lap: (1) *Miss Goodman Real Estate* 157.886.

HEAT 1 (Re-run): (1) *Beacon Electric* 156.460, 400, 860; (2) *Miss Apollo* 146.712, 300, 905; (3) *Miss FLAV-R-PAC* 137.242, 225, 500; *Beacon Plumbing* DSQ – Disqualified for causing the stoppage of the heat's first running, 0, 70. Fast lap: (2) *Beacon Electric* 157.585.

HEAT 4: (1) *Miss Goodman Real Estate* 140.255, 400, 1200; (2) *Miss FLAV-R-PAC* 123.688, 300, 800; *Beacon Electric* DNS – 0, 860. Fast lap: (1) *Miss Goodman Real Estate* 149.770.

HEAT 5: (1) *Miss Goodman Real Estate* 152.100, 400, 1600; (2) *Beacon Electric* 129.759, 300, 1160; (3) *Miss FLAV-R-PAC* 123.951, 225, 1025; (4) *Miss Apollo* 113.827, 169, 1074. Fast lap: (1) *Miss Apollo* 156.737.

FINAL: (1) *Beacon Electric* 157.818, 400, 1560; (2) *Miss Goodman Real Estate* 156.815, 300, 1900; (3) *Miss FLAV-R-PAC* 133.844, 225, 1250; (4) *Miss Apollo* 115.370, 169, 1243. Fast lap: (3) *Miss Goodman Real Estate* 159.679.

COMPILED BY ALLEN STILES

Nilsen to third, and Villwock to fourth.

When asked if he got cut off, Kelly said, "Pretty much. They were almost going to have a three-boat final."

Final Heat

Tate's win in Heat Five gave him the national championship. So, what was his strategy for the final? "Play it safe and use our speed. We win some and we lose some, but we will still be the national champion."

All four boats went slow to the start-up. *FLAV-R-PAC* was in lane one, *Beacon Electric* in lane two, *Apollo* in lane three, and *Goodman* in lane four. Tate was first across the start, and he, Kelly,

and Villwock went down the backstretch together. As the boats neared turn two, *Apollo* veered to the right and went through *Goodman's* roostertail. *FLAV-R-PAC* went through *Apollo's* roostertail. Both boats got very wet and moved slowly through the turn. They continued in the heat but at a reduced speed.

Villwock explained what happened. "Approaching the turn, the rudder started fluttering, the steering wheel started vibrating, and I couldn't control the steering. The boat veered right, and I went through *Goodman's* roostertail. I was able to finish the heat, but I had to go slow."

Tate and Kelly raced side-by-side



The final-heat battle between Andrew Tate in *Miss Goodman Real Estate* (left) and J. Michael Kelly in *Beacon Electric*

for the entire heat, running laps as fast as 159 mph. Tate had a two-boat-length lead at the end of lap three. Tate pulled ahead a bit in turn one of lap four, but Kelly took the lead in turn two and led by a boat length at the end of the lap.

In lap five, the two boats entered turn two together, but the inside lane and some rough water for Tate enabled Kelly to pull away and win by a rooster-tail. Nilsen finished third with Villwock in fourth. This was a great heat. Kelly averaged 157.818 mph for the heat, which set a new H1 record for a five-lap heat on a 2.5-mile course.

Kelly talked about how he won. “It was important for me to be inside of Andrew. The crew gave me a very fast boat. We got faster with each heat. In the last lap, my radio man told me to get as close to the buoy line as I could. He told me the clean water in turn two was there, and the rest of turn two was rough from the 11 and the 27. Andrew had to go through the rough water, and I was able to pull away.”

Tate was not pleased with second place in the final. “Second place sucks, but congratulations to the Strong team. It wasn’t the end result we wanted, but

it was a great final. JMK and I went into every turn close and came out where we wanted. We can only have a heat like that if you trust the guy next to you.”

Nilsen was pleased with his third-place finish. “We had the most engine changes for a weekend. It is a pleasure to race with this team and for our *FLAV-R-PAC* sponsor.”

Kelly had several thank yous. “Thanks to Darrell and Vanessa Strong. You supported me when I needed it the most. Thanks to Corey. Thanks to Jim Sechler, our new crew chief who won in his first weekend. Thanks to Tim Cullin, my spotter who guided me in the final. The final will last forever!”

Strong Racing owner Darrell Strong also had thank yous. “Thanks to Bruce from BWR Racing. We are partners in the sport, and we plan the business part of all this. Thanks also to John Goodman and his people for all they do for the sport.”

The 2025 H1 season had some big challenges including the weather, accidents, and the small boat counts. However, this is a sport that is loved by its fans. We need more fans, which can come along with more race sites and more boats.

Here is a marketing suggestion: Any pitch should include the video of this race’s final. It is the sport at its best! ❖



J. Michael Kelly addresses the members of his *Beacon Electric* team celebrate their victory in the Bill Muncy Cup at San Diego.



Rolie Schmitten

First test run of the day. Later the sun came out, skies turned blue, and the lake flattened for the final footage used in the TV commercial.

The day a hydro appeared on scenic Lake Wenatchee

BY JON OSTERBERG

It's been a while since Unlimited hydroplanes appeared in national TV ads, the last one being *Pay 'N Pak* in a swimming pool touting T-Mobile in 2018.

But over the years, several ads have stirred excitement as hydros flashed across TV screens. Ron Musson throttled *Miss Bardahl* down the Ohio River in 1962 before lighting up a Camel cigarette at the dock: "Every inch a man's smoke!" *My Gypsy* at full throttle in 1968 as the ad jingle plays, "Taste that beats the others cold, Pepsi pours it on!"

Miss Budweiser appeared several times, including a 1978 ad with gorgeous overhead shots on Lake Washington; Dean Chenoweth churning Lake Mead in 1981; the *Bud T-1* debut in 1986, "a tradition of horsepower"; and the 1989 montage, "She's Bernie Little's Miss Bud-



Rolie Schmitten

TV crews shot the ad to showcase a snowy mountain backdrop.

weiser."

In 1992, new *Bud* driver Chip Hanauer shot the beer boat across scenic Lake Wenatchee near Leavenworth,

Washington. No easy feat, as he had to accelerate across the narrow width of the lake to capture the mountain backdrop sought by the director. The lake also had

no public facility to launch and retrieve *Miss Budweiser*.

No matter. Anheuser-Busch arranged to have the *Bud* crew use the private property of Byron Dickinson, a lifelong Lake Wenatchee resident with a home and property at Crescent Beach on the lake's north shore. The estate had a broad beach and dock, but in 1992 the locale was undeveloped, so a short road had to be built for *Bud's* rolling stock to access it from North Shore Drive.

Hanauer had recently joined the *Bud* team after a one-year hiatus from hydro racing during which he drove Toyota race cars. *Bud's* stable included the 1987 T-2 hull affectionately nicknamed "Thumper" and the 1989 T-3, which had been modified over the winter. Both hulls were tested extensively in Kennewick on March 10 to 12, running 70 laps, before Chip drove T-3 for the Lake Wenatchee ad in early April.

Crew member John Rheinberger recalls that shooting the ad wasn't easy.

"Chip made some very tight turns close to the beach, but they didn't use the footage. We broke a skid fin rod, and that was the end of the tight turns," he said. "We installed a replacement rod, but we were worried about the design not being strong enough. The whole skid fin rods and brackets were redesigned after that."

After repairs, both T-2 and T-3 tested May 5 in Seattle. Chip and team went on to win seven races in 1992, including the Gold Cup and national championship.

The Lake Wenatchee Budweiser TV ad can be found on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IkXUbsy3AaQ>. ❖



Google Maps



Rollie Schmitt



Rollie Schmitt

TOP: The arrow points to Crescent Beach on Lake Wenatchee, part of the Dickinson estate (red dot) used for staging the Budweiser commercial. **MIDDLE:** Longtime Lake Wenatchee resident Byron Dickinson rented his property and dock for the effort. **ABOVE:** A new road was built to give the *Bud* rolling stock access to the beach.

Vintage hydros the star of show at annual Mahogany and Merlot

BY CRAIG FJARLIE

The first weekend of October is always a good time to visit Chelan, Washington. That's when the Hydroplane and Raceboat Museum runs their vintage Unlimiteds on Lake Chelan. Usually, a few boats that are privately owned participate in the event to augment the museum's fleet. That sometimes adds an element of surprise to the proceedings.

The boats at this year's Mahogany and Merlot included the replica first *Miss Thriftway*; the replica *Miss Wahoo* in its 1957 configuration; the 1958 *Miss Bardahl*; *Notre Dame*, which was built in 1961 and originally ran as *Miss Lumberville*; *Blue Chip*; *Miss U.S. IV*; the 1967 *Miss Budweiser*, which was built in 1962 as *Notre Dame*; the "Winged Wonder" *Pay 'n Pak*; and *The Squire Shop*.

Pay 'n Pak had a close call on the highway a few miles from Chelan. A UPS truck stopped on the road so the driver could make a delivery. Traffic had to stop quickly. A pickup truck that was in front of the *Pay 'n Pak* rig stopped suddenly to avoid the UPS truck. The *Pay 'n Pak* rig had to go off the road and into a ditch



Herman Marchetti



Herman Marchetti



Herman Marchetti

TOP: Somebody takes an exciting ride aboard the "Winged Wonder" *Pay 'n Pak* on Lake Chelan. **MIDDLE:** *The Squire Shop* thrilled spectators with a stack fire before its first run on Saturday. **ABOVE:** The *Notre Dame* cruises onto the lake with another rider.

Herman Marchetti



Herman Marchetti



Michael Lemier



TOP: The recently restored 1967 *Miss Budweiser* was one of the hits at this year's Mahogany and Merlot.
MIDDLE: A rider takes to the lake aboard a replica of the first *Miss Thriftway*, dressed as it looked in 1957.
ABOVE: A tribute to the late Chris Denslow was erected at his favorite vantage point by "The Dudes."

to stop without hitting the pickup. The hauler ended up with a damaged oil pan, and the boat's right sponson chine had a scrape in the paint, but no structural damage. Another museum truck had to tow the boat's trailer to the pit area, then tow the truck to Mitch Evans' shop for repairs to the oil pan.

Friday was a day for museum boats to give rides to people who had either paid for the ride or had volunteered at the museum and were rewarded with a ride in gratitude for their service. The weather was pleasantly warm with only a slight breeze. Because of the tight quarters in the pit area, *The Squire Shop* was in the pits while *Pay 'N Pak* sat on its trailer in the upper parking lot. The two boats would trade places on Saturday. *The Squire Shop* had a good-sized stack fire the first time it went out. The stack fire went out when the engine finally started; there was no damage to the boat.

While boats were giving rides on Saturday morning, a special event took place in a corner of the beer garden. Julie Heerensperger Warren, daughter of Dave Heerensperger, the owner of *Pay 'N Pak* when the boat raced, gave a check for \$5,000 to Pancho Simonson, who is in the process of restoring *Miss Spokane*. The boat holds a special place in the hearts of each; Simonson's father, Kent Simonson, was team manager of *Miss Spokane*, and Dave Heerensperger sponsored the boat

as *Miss Eagle Electric*.

The 1967 *Miss Budweiser* went in the water for the first time in several years. The boat is currently owned by John Goodman, who also sponsors the U-91 on the H1 circuit. Dixon Smith was the first to take it out. He ran a few laps at moderate speed. When he came in, he reported the hull has some leaks and the right sponson was filling with water, which made the boat difficult to turn. The hull was drained and then Mike Hanson took it out. He ran slightly faster but also reported the boat had water leaks. Both Smith and Hanson were pleased that the Dash-7 Rolls-Merlin performed well, but the source of the leaks in the hull will need to be located and repaired.

Mitch Evans gave rides in *Blue Chip*. He used a gearbox with a 2.48-to-1 ratio, that he acquired from Ed Cooper. Most of the museum boats have gears with a ratio of about 2.75-to-1. Evans said he liked the new gear ratio. He had a two-blade prop to try, but said it needed work to sharpen the leading edges of the blades.

Six new drivers took boats out so they could become eligible to drive vintage Unlimiteds. Dwight Malhiot, his son Zach Malhiot, and Kyle Bahl, all veteran outboard racers, took boats out, as did Shaun Kelson, Paul O'Brien, and George Greer. All six will need to get more seat time before becoming eligible to take people for rides. *Miss Wahoo*, *Notre Dame*, and *Miss U.S. IV* ran an exhibition heat after the lunch break.

Among the people who went for a ride in an Unlimited was Andy Muntz, the editor of the *Unlimited NewsJournal*. He rode in the '58 *Miss Bardahl* with Jere Heiser as the driver. Muntz gives a full accounting of his ride elsewhere in this issue. There was a forecast of wind and rain overnight, so when the rides ended, things were buttoned up. *Pay 'N Pak* and *The Squire Shop* changed places, and *Miss Budweiser* pulled out of the pits.

Sunday was clear but cooler than Saturday. The wind was brisk, yet the wa-



Herman Marchetti

Three of the eight vintage Unlimiteds that appeared at this year's Mahogany and Merlot. From the top, a replica of the 1956 version of *Miss Wahoo*, the 1962 version of *Notre Dame* and *Miss U.S. IV*.

ter was still good enough for the boats to run. *Miss U.S. IV* was going to run early with Mark Weber driving, but there was a problem with the engine. The crew was concerned the engine had a burned piston, so the boat went back on the trailer, done for the weekend.

Other boats ran, but as noon approached, the wind picked up. Mitch Evans reported there were whitecaps in the first turn. He felt it was too rough to give rides to anyone who had never been in a hydroplane. Referee Patrick Gleason said

there would be a lunch break, then the course conditions would be evaluated. The wind continued to blow and shortly before 2 p.m., the remainder of the event was called off.

Mahogany and Merlot always produces a fine show for people who love the sights and sounds of Unlimited hydroplanes, the way they used to be. As more boats are restored, it will continue to be a great event to close out the season on scenic Lake Chelan. ❖

A lifelong dream comes true for 88-year-old hydro fan

BY PATRICK SMITH

Among the 60 hydroplane rides provided by The Hydroplane and Raceboat Museum during Mahogany and Merlot weekend at Chelan was one that had special significance for 88-year-old Larry Peterson of Kenmore, Washington. Peterson has had a lifelong dream to ride in one of the boats ever since he had a chance encounter with Mira Slovak, driver of *Miss Wahoo*, in 1957.

Peterson, who has been deaf since childbirth, remembers feeling the power of the boat's Rolls-Royce Merlin engine

vibrate in his chest, providing for him a more visceral connection to the term



Larry Peterson with his two daughters, Julia and Laura, before his ride in *Miss Wahoo*.

Photos Courtesy of the Peterson Family

“thunderboat” than for most boat-racing fans. He has had a desire ever since to experience that sensation at a much closer distance with a ride in the cockpit of one of the boats.

That opportunity presented itself when Peterson, a long-time supporter of the museum, learned from museum director David Williams that he could purchase a ride in a hydro with a donation to the museum. Peterson’s daughters, Julia and Laura, then went to work to find the money needed to make that happen, explaining that it was an opportunity for him to participate that was unlike that available for any other sport.

His ride, fittingly enough, was scheduled for the replica of *Miss Wahoo*, which is presented just as the original looked when Mira Slovak drove it in 1957.

Speaking through a sign-language interpreter before his ride, Peterson remarked that growing up he was a huge hydroplane fan. “My favorites were the *Slo-mo-shun IV* driven by Joe Taggart, the *Wahoo* driven by Mira Slovak, and the *Hawaii Kai* “Pink Lady” with the experienced crew from *Slo-mo IV*.” He said that when hydroplanes switched to helicopter engines, the sport no longer had the same draw for him, since he loved the vibrations from the loud World War II fighter plane engines. However, he has remained a lifetime fan of hydroplane racing.

When it came time for the ride, Peterson’s daughter Laura helped the *Wahoo* crew by acting as her father’s interpreter, was even allowed to get on the boat herself, and later wrote to tell us what happened next. “When getting suited up for the ride he was told he had to wear the earplugs despite being completely deaf. He complied since he didn’t want to go against the American Power Boat Association regulations and be disqualified. The thoughtful *Wahoo* crew went out of their way to communicate with Larry and help him feel prepared,” she wrote.

“The actual ride on the *Wahoo* was incredible,” she continued, relating the impressions that her father told her afterward. “It was the most unforgettable, thrilling, and scary experience to ride the *Wahoo*, especially on those curves!”

She told us that having witnessed the *Wahoo* flip, her father took the ride and the driving expertise required very seriously. “I had a wonderful driver, Jere Heiser, for this once-in-a-lifetime ride,” he said. “It was a long wait.”

There is speculation that Peterson may be the oldest person to have gone 130 miles per hour in a hydroplane. But, most importantly, Mahogany and Merlot 2025 gave Larry Petersen the ability to fulfill his lifelong dream of again experiencing the thunder of the *Wahoo* from a new vantage point. ❖



Photos Courtesy of the Peterson Family

UPPER LEFT: Larry Peterson and family members with Mira Slovak in 1957. **UPPER RIGHT:** Peterson with *Miss Wahoo* in the pit area at Mahogany and Merlot in Chelan. **ABOVE LEFT:** Peterson during his ride on Lake Chelan aboard *Miss Wahoo*. **ABOVE RIGHT:** Peterson in the cockpit of *Miss Wahoo*.

WHAT IS IT LIKE?

Is there a hydro fan alive who hasn't at some point wondered what it must be like to be in the cockpit of an Unlimited hydroplane as it careens across the water? Two members of the Unlimited NewsJournal team have had that thrill during the past year. Chris Tracy, president of Unlimiteds Unanimous, went for a ride on Lake Washington last May while Andy Muntz, the editor of the NewsJournal, circled the Lake Chelan racecourse during the Mahogany and Merlot event in October. Both were in the cockpit of the same boat, the 1958 *Miss Bardahl*, but came away with different impressions about the experience. Their descriptions follow. If you've ever wondered what a person sees and feels when aboard a speeding Unlimited hydroplane, their stories should provide you with an answer.

The ride of my life

BY CHRIS TRACY

“**Y**ou aren't getting any younger” my wife said, when she heard one could buy a ride on a vintage Unlimited hydroplane from the Hydroplane and Raceboat Museum. And she suggested that it would be a good birthday gift to myself.

So, with little hesitation, I bought a ride. It kind of represented one of those watershed moments. My dad was a hydro fan. And, believe it or not, my parents rented a house and our family moved to the Lakewood area of south Seattle for six months, that included the summer of 1959, because it viewed the hydro racecourse.

The house had seen better days, but the rooftop deck had a 180-degree view of the hydroplane race. And my parents held a hydroplane race party for the Seattle race in 1959. And I have been hooked as a fan ever since. After the lease was up, we moved to another place in the nearby Mt. Baker neighborhood and later bought a house in Mt. Baker. So, while



Chris Tracy in the cockpit of *Miss Bardahl* before his ride on Lake Washington.

I was growing up, I could bike to Lake Washington every time I heard the engine of a boat testing. And every summer, I'd bike to the lake each day around the race and was one of those kids in the cold pits trading pins. And dad and I attended the race each year on Sunday.

My father was in the grocery busi-

ness, so many of the people involved in racing were related to dad's business. Phil and Henry Gai headed the hospitality part of Seafair for decades and their bakery was a vendor for the company dad worked for. He knew folks from many sponsors, from companies like Oberto, Budweiser, Sunny Jim, Olympia Beer,

Chris Denslow

Kellogg's, and more.

As I got older, I got special passes, even seats on the barge that used to be set up on Lake Washington, all from his work connections. And, by the way, my dad repaid that kindness—with displays in the chain of Seattle and Tacoma grocery stores he headed for products, from Budweiser to Sunny Jim Peanut Butter and Jam, at race time each year. So, a ride in a vintage hydro was a big deal for me, and I'd be fibbing if I didn't note that it brought back so many boat racing memories, and especially time with my dad.

But I had to overcome one obstacle. HARM rides are generally given during the Lake Chelan event, Mahogany and Merlot, held in October. My wife and I had booked a cruise during that exact time, so it would not work. I thought I'd likely need to delay the ride until October 2026, but my wife urged me to contact HARM's David Williams.

We knew that HARM was testing boats in May. Maybe I could get my ride on Lake Washington? To my surprise, Williams said he could not guarantee me a ride in May, but he'd try his best to fit me in. As time got closer, I got emails from HARM with more instructions.

May 17 arrived and my wife, Jayne, and I headed to Lake Washington and the Stan Sayres Pits. The weather was cloudy and cool, and Lake Washington was Detroit River rough. I headed over to an area to sign rider paperwork and go over instructions.

Linda Williams, spouse to HARM's David Williams, was in charge of this area. She told me that I would be riding in the 1958 *Miss Bardahl* and she told me my ride order. Also, my driver would be Glenn Raymond. She went over all the paperwork with me, mainly insurance paperwork. She talked about what to expect during the ride and talked about the hand signals used with the driver. Her complete instructions and information made me feel really confident about the ride. I put on a driver suit, much lighter and thinner than what I expected it to be.



Chris Denslow



Chris Denslow



Jayne Tracy

TOP: Chris Tracy (left) with Glenn Raymond. **MIDDLE:** Squeezed into the cockpit and ready to roar onto Lake Washington. **ABOVE:** The *Miss Bardahl*'s engine comes to life near the dock at Stan Sayres Pits.

Then it was time to get fitted with a life jacket. I tried on several life jackets and Linda decided which one fit me the best—the one that had been worn by Chip Hanauer! Then it was time to try on helmets, and I tried on several, most were too big, even with ear protection on. Finally, I found one that was a good fit. Linda mentioned that the helmets tended to ride up during the ride and to hold my chin down during the ride to minimize it.

When my turn to ride was near, I walked over to the dock area. I talked with my driver, Glenn Raymond. Raymond went over hand signals, how we sit and about my opportunity to take the wheel.

I got onboard the *Miss Bardahl*. The HARM volunteers were really helpful to make sure my wife got good photos and that all was safe for me. Getting into the cockpit was interesting. It is much deeper than I expected. It was a big step down to the seat of the boat. Glenn got in and sat next to me. We were a good fit for the bench seat; it seemed like our butts fit snugly into the seat. I sat on the left. The rider puts their right arm around the driver's shoulder.

After Glenn went through a starting sequence and a small stack fire, the boat started almost right away, and we were away from the dock. The water was rough, so I knew we'd likely go a little slower than rides with smooth water.

Frankly, I did not know what to expect. I could see and hear the huge engine work and purr, but with noise protection inside my helmet, I did not find the noise really all that loud. I didn't feel a lot of wind or heat, as well. The hull would kind of sway from side to side, but I would not describe the ride as rough. Honestly, I had a small runabout boat years ago that was low to the water, and I found the ride kind of similar, except this was a whole lot faster!

And as we completed the first lap, I was excited. On the course, I can attest that finding the way around the race-



Chris Denslow



Chris Denslow

TOP: Another perspective of the engine starting at the beginning of Tracy's run in *Miss Bardahl*.

ABOVE: Chris Tracy in *Miss Bardahl* as the boat speeds across Lake Washington in Seattle last May.

course and buoys is not easy. In retrospect, I know Glenn gave me the hand signal asking if I wanted to go faster. But I took that signal as meaning it was my turn to take the wheel, and I took the wheel out of one turn and I was pretty proud of my driving, until Glenn took control again. I was starting to veer inside the course!

Coming back to the dock, turning off the engine and floating to the dock is a skill and Glenn did it well. Getting out of the boat was a little like getting in, not as easy as it looks. The HARM volunteers helped me out.

I asked Glenn how fast we went.

There is no speedometer in the 1958 *Miss Bardahl*. He thought we ran about 100 mph, not bad for such a lumpy day on the lake.

It was the ride of my life. I'm sure my dad was looking down and was as excited as I was; hydros were our thing. This was a day to celebrate. A day to remember my youth and how important boat racing on Lake Washington was to me growing up in Seattle. ♦

An intense sensory overload

BY ANDY MUNTZ

I should admit something at the outset: Although I've been fascinated by hydroplanes since I was a young child watching the races on a black and white TV at my family's home in Browns Point near Tacoma, I've never had a burning desire to actually ride in one—just as my fascination with space flight in the 1960s never caused in me a yearning to be strapped onto the nose of a Saturn V rocket and blasted toward the Moon. I've always been grateful someone else was willing to have that adventure so I could be entertained.

Nevertheless, when my birthday rolled around a year ago, my wife and kids pitched in together to purchase a ride for me in one of the boats operated by the Hydroplane and Raceboat Museum. That was very nice of them. I'm sure, knowing about my passion for the sport, they felt they were giving me a dream come true. But, frankly, I thought they knew me better than that. They must certainly be aware that I've never had an interest in carnival rides. Did they not get the clue when I'd always volunteer to stay behind and take pictures while they

did the roller coaster?

It also happened that on the day that this gift was presented to me, I was having a medical emergency. My brain was in a thick fog, people noticed that my smile was crooked, and the words were stumbling from my mouth like I was Joe Biden at a debate. Sure enough, a visit to the emergency room confirmed that I had suffered a small stroke. My neurologist said recovery would be a matter of time as my brain discovered circuitry that provided a detour around the damaged area. Meanwhile, the hydro ride, scheduled for Mahogany and Merlot only a month later at Chelan, would be put on hold.

So, during the following year I did as the doctors strongly suggested. With the help of regular exercise, pharmaceuticals, and the Mediterranean Diet, I shed the weight of two bowling balls, reduced the blood pressure, and got the cholesterol under control. That put the date for the hydro ride back on the calendar.

The experience started with what the museum folks call a Drivers Ground School. On a gray Saturday morning in early September, several of us riders met at the museum south of Seattle to sign paperwork, get fitted for helmets and life jackets, and to learn what to expect when it came time for our ride. The highlight was an opportunity to sit in the cockpit of one of the old hydros and actually go through the sequence of starting the engine.

I was assigned to the old *Miss Bardahl*, a boat that Mira Slovak helped drive to the 1958 national title and in which Ron Musson won the 1961 World's Championship race in Seattle. As a drizzle began to fall, I stepped onto the boat's trailer, climbed over its green deck, stepped into the cockpit, and squeezed myself into the snug, black, cushioned driver's seat.

In front of me was the steel steering



Leslie Muntz

After starting the Allison engine in *Miss Bardahl*, Andy Muntz climbs from the boat's cockpit. His coach, museum volunteer and *Bardahl* crewmember Greg Headman, is on the right.

wheel, dark-gray in color, slightly smaller than a shoulder's width in diameter, with four flat spokes or arms, a black hand grip around its perimeter, and that was bolted at its hub to the steering shaft. Behind that was the charcoal-gray instrument panel. Three black dials about four inches in diameter were directly in front of me (from the left, manifold pressure, tachometer, and a cluster of small gauges that indicated things such as fuel level and oil pressure). Four toggle switches were mounted together in a row toward the lower left corner of the panel and a round black dial with a black lever hanging down from above its center was on the lower right. On the side of the cockpit next to my right knee was a square metal housing. Attached to its side was a metal lever that stood about five inches tall with a rounded black knob on its top that looked like the gearshift lever on a car.

Standing on the trailer next to me and leaning into the cockpit was my coach, Greg Headman. He explained what the dials and switches were for and went through the procedure for starting the engine.

I would mainly focus on two of the toggle switches to my left. The switch at the far end (the master) and the one closest to me (for the fuel pump) were already flipped downward to the "on" position. As for the two switches between them, Greg pointed to the one closer to me (the primer) and said I should push down on it, count "one, and two," then let it spring back up and immediately press the other spring-loaded switch to its left (the starter). As the engine engaged, I should give it more primer to coax it along and then slowly push forward on the lever that was next to my right knee (the fuel-mixture control).

Lesson over, Greg reached down next to me on the left wall of the cockpit and rotated a small switch that turned on the boat's electrical system, and asked me to turn on the magnetos, which would generate pulses of electrical energy that



Miss Bardahl is lowered onto Lake Chelan during Mahogany and Merlot.

fired the engine's spark plugs. Reaching to that round dial on my right, I pulled the black lever left to the "both" position. Then, as he put earmuffs on over his head to protect himself from the noise, and handed a set to me, Greg pointed to the primer switch and signaled that we were ready to go.

I pressed the primer with my left index finger to squirt fuel into the cylinders, counted to myself "one, and two," then let it go and pressed the starter with my middle finger. I could faintly hear the familiar banging and clunking sound of the 12 pistons and 48 inlet and exhaust valves moving inside the engine, then I saw puffs of smoke shoot from the exhaust stacks. Greg pointed again to the primer switch, so I pushed that for another second or two to give it another squirt of fuel, then he motioned for me to move the fuel control forward to adjust the fuel mixture.

The earmuffs were working so well I could just faintly hear the engine, but the video that I watched afterward confirmed that the engine had idled slowly

at first, then slowed and almost died, but revived itself, apparently as I gave it more primer and changed the fuel mixture. Soon, it was purring steadily.

Greg told me he wanted me to let the engine idle a few seconds at 1,000 rpm then I should slowly move it up to 2,000 rpm. When he pointed to the tachometer gauge in front of me, I knew it was time to give it more gas. The gas pedal was much stiffer than the one in my car, but giving it a firm shove with my right foot, I gradually moved it enough so I could see the needle on the tachometer begin to slowly climb higher. When it eventually pointed to the "20" on the dial, Greg motioned for me to kill the engine, which I did by pulling the fuel mixture control lever all the way back to the cut-off position.

That was it. The engine was again silent. The video let me know after that a round of applause came from my classmates who were standing nearby in the steady drizzle waiting for their turn.

Four weeks later came Phase Two of the experience.

The first weekend of October typ-

Leslie Muntz



Craig Fjarlie

Muntz gets settled into *Miss Bardahl's* cockpit before his ride on Lake Chelan.

He told me to compress myself as tight as I could against the left side of the cockpit, then Jere came aboard and, like jamming a cork into a wine bottle, squeezed himself next to me, my right arm wrapped around his back.

ically brings glorious weather to Chelan. Thirty years ago, we'd take the kids out of grade school at this time of year and, with a couple of other families, spend a long weekend near the town to enjoy a last taste of warm sunshine before returning home to the fall rains in Western Washington, just four hours away across Stevens Pass.

Like usual, this year's early-October weather was great—sunny and about 70 degrees—and the atmosphere of hydroplanes was clearly in the air. When we arrived in Chelan on Friday afternoon and parked the car in front of the tourist shops along the main street, we were immediately greeted by the unmistakable warbling roar of the big boats turning laps on the nearby lake.

The museum organizers had scheduled my ride for Saturday afternoon, so I reported to the pits after the lunch break. As Denise helped me suit up, I learned that I would ride in my old friend the 1958 *Miss Bardahl*, and that my driver would be Jere Heiser. He typically drove *Miss Wahoo* for the museum, but Glenn Raymond, *Bardahl's* usual driver and a high school classmate of mine, had to miss this year's event. Then, garbed in a black driver's suit, an orange life jacket strapped firmly around my chest, support straps pulled tight around my upper thighs, and a shiny hi-vis orange, full-faced helmet resting on my knee, I sat waiting

in the pit area as other riders took their turns, as other boats circled the course, and as *Bardahl* was prepared for duty, plucked from its trailer, and lowered onto the lake. Considering the anxiety I had been feeling in anticipation of this experience, my nerves remained surprisingly calm.

Shortly before 3 p.m., I was led down the ramp to the dock, where *Miss Bardahl* and Jere Heiser waited. After we met, Jere went over the hand signals that we'd need to communicate, including the signs for "go faster," "go slower" (which he said nobody had ever used), the one for "everything's okay," and the one for "take me back to the pits."

Greg Headman was also there to help. With the helmet now pulled over my head, I couldn't see where my feet were landing, so Greg carefully guided me onto *Miss Bardahl's* deck and into the cockpit, where a bench had replaced the snug driver's seat. He told me to compress myself as tight as I could against the left side of the cockpit, then Jere came aboard and, like jamming a cork into a wine bottle, squeezed himself next to me, my right arm wrapped around his back.

Once given the sign that the course was open, Jere pushed the starter and the primer switches, the engine knocked and clunked, and it roared to life. We immediately leaped away from the dock, Jere turned right, punched the throttle, and

the boat climbed over its bow wave and onto the water's surface. As we blasted our way past the south turn and headed north onto the front straightaway, the sensations immediately clobbered me smack in the face.

There are two questions people have asked about my ride. The first is: What's it like to be in a speeding hydroplane?

Chip Hanauer once described it as being like you're inside a steel barrel being shoved off Niagara Falls while guys are pounding on the outside with ball-peen hammers. I'd say he wasn't far off.

My primary impression was the noise. Intense might be the best way to describe it; sensory overload would be another. There was so much powerful stimulation being thrown at me all at once, my brain couldn't absorb it all.

The noise! Imagine the loudest engine you've ever heard, one that you can easily hear many miles away, and put it only four feet in front of you. When I trailer-fired the thing four weeks before, I could barely hear the engine purr, but now the Allison was running at much greater power and screaming a sort of crackling, blasting, thunderous blare that overwhelmed the capacity of my ears and that made every cell in my body tremble. Then, as if that wasn't enough, there was also the shriek of the wind whirling past our heads, the howling of the gearbox near our feet, and hammering blasts that fired off at a pace faster than a machine gun—the sound of the boat crashing at over 100 mph into every wave top.

As *Bardahl* careened across the lake's surface, it sent shock waves through the hull (and its occupants) that tried to shake us like we were beans in a maraca, except that we were squished so tightly into the cockpit that we couldn't rattle. Meanwhile, amidst the tumult, the boat also performed a dance that aviators call a Dutch Roll—pitching up and down like a teeter-totter, while also rolling and yawing side to side, back and forth. It felt like *Bardahl* was attempting to stay balanced on the top of a giant ball.



Craig Farlie



Michael Lemier



Herman Marchetti

TOP: Muntz and driver Jere Heiser are squeezed into the cockpit together as Jere reaches for the toggle switches to start the engine on *Miss Bardahl*. **MIDDLE:** With a blast of the engine, off they go onto Lake Chelan. **ABOVE:** Cruising at high speed around the racecourse at Mahogany and Merlot. Jere Heiser said after the run that they may have reached 130 mph.



Miss Bardahl rounds the south turn on the Lake Chelan racecourse with Andy Muntz riding along in the cockpit.

Everything that I could see became a quivering blur as we blasted, shimmied, and swayed our way toward the north at an astonishing speed then circled around the buoys of the first turn, my left elbow and forearm clinging desperately to the bit of padded cowling that was plastered to the ribs on my left side. As we turned, the undulating boat swayed to the left and would slide to the right, then sway and slide a little more, sway and slide again several more times until we finally reached the other straightaway.

Jere gave me a thumbs-up sign, meaning, “Do you want to go faster?”

I responded with a thumbs-up and we were off—the noise, the vibration, and the dancing growing even more intense. After reaching the south turn, I once more grasped as tight as I could with my left elbow as we slid sideways, pitched slightly to the right, and undulated, shimmied, and swayed around those buoys, then we accelerated again to the north.

Contrary to what one might expect with the engine being so close, I did not notice the exhaust or its heat. I caught just a whiff of exhaust only occasionally and briefly felt the engine’s heat only

a couple of times. After completing another dance around the north turn, Jere once again gave me the thumbs-up sign and, feeling brave for a moment, I responded as I had before.

This is where the second question got its answer. People have also asked: “How fast did you go?” On this straightaway run, Jere later guessed (because the boat doesn’t have a speedometer) that we probably reached 125 to 130 miles per hour. Then, in a flash, we were back to the south turn, and my left elbow again did its important job.

Once around the south turn, Jere gave me another signal we had discussed on the dock. He tapped my arm and put his left arm around my back. I responded by lifting my right arm over his head and to the front, and I took hold of the steering wheel. It was my turn to drive!

Sorry to disappoint you if you are expecting me to describe something profound about this part of the journey, but it went smoothly. I found the steering to be somewhat stiff, like an old Chevy pickup without power steering, but overall, the boat handled surprisingly easy. My biggest issue was vision. With all the vibration and spray, it wasn’t easy for me to see the buoys and tell which direction we were going. Thank goodness that Jere’s right hand had a tight grip on the bottom of the steering wheel and could help guide me around the north turn and down the next straightaway.

Still, not being able to see clearly became disconcerting enough for me that I opted to relinquish the helm, so I signaled for Jere to resume control. My right arm went back behind his back, his left hand went back to the steering wheel, and we danced around the south turn once more, went north around those turn buoys a last time, and then, with the engine still blasting its intense noise into our faces and with the boat slamming into the wave tops while doing its shimmy-and-sway balancing act, we returned down the backstretch at a reduced speed and straight into the cove



Andy Muntz debriefs with driver Jere Heiser after the ride.

in front of the dock. Jere cut the engine, silence returned, and we drifted to a stop.

Jere climbed out of the cockpit and onto the deck so he could handle the lines from the patrol boat, leaving me to contemplate alone in the quiet cockpit and to reflect on what had just happened. Calmly floating there on Lake Chelan aboard the boat that had won the first Apple Cup race on that lake 67 years before, I couldn't help but marvel at the

realization that I was sitting in a cockpit where two hydro-racing legends, Mira Slovak and Ron Musson, had once sat. During that moment I also contemplated the events of the past year and how my loving family and my life-long passion for hydro racing had led to this incredible experience.

Soon, as *Bardahl* drifted closer to the dock, I could see that people were yelling congratulations to me, but I couldn't hear

them. Despite wearing the ear plugs I was given when I suited up, my ears were ringing so loud it felt like my head was in a steel bucket—the only other sound I could make out was a faint rattling, buzzing sound as people talked and helped me step out of the cockpit and onto the dock. My ears had surrendered to the cacophony of intense sounds, and, what's more, it would take more than a week for my hearing to return to normal. (Yes, it was that loud!)

A month before, during lunch at the Drivers Ground School, one of the veteran riders had told us that our hydro ride would be a life-changing experience. I guess that's true. I now realize that the apprehensions that I carried with me for much of the past year had been misplaced. The ride was a heck of a lot of fun—an experience I will never forget. The insights I learned in starting the engine and the sights, sounds, and other sensory sensations of being in a speeding hydroplane will also help as I continue to write about this sport.

But, although the ride will always be a cherished memory, the experience didn't change one thing: I'm still going to stay away from roller coasters. ❖

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