



## Cindy Shirley is named crew chief of *Miss HomeStreet*.

**T**he *Miss HomeStreet* hydroplane racing team has named Cindy Shirley to be the crew chief, thus becoming the first woman to hold that position on a championship-level race team in the turbine-era of the sport. Shirley, who has been with the team for 15 years, most recently served as its boat chief.

"I'm proud to be a part of the *Miss HomeStreet* family and thankful for the opportunity to lead a team of talented professionals," Shirley said. "Ever since watching my first hydroplane race as a little girl, I've been in love with the sport. It's a dream come true to be part of this championship team."

As crew chief, Shirley will manage a team of 12 people as they try to defend their national championship. "In the past couple of years, Cindy has helped build a strong team that really values camaraderie," said Jimmy Shane, the boat's driver. "I know she will do an outstanding job and lead us to another championship."

A resident of Everett, Washington, and a native of Louisville, Ken-



Craig Barney

tucky, Shirley has been in charge of driver safety systems, general cockpit maintenance, and also communicates with the driver during races. When not racing, she is the director of the Office of Research at the University of Washington, Bothell campus.

"On behalf of the *HomeStreet* family, we want to congratulate

Cindy on this amazing accomplishment," said Mark Mason, president and CEO of *HomeStreet* Bank. "We're proud of her, and we are proud to be part of a team that is making history."

Shirley will step into the role held by former crew chief Dan Hoover, who passed away earlier this year. ❖

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# The U-14 is donated to Healing Heroes With Sports.

The U-14 hull that was operated by Centurion Racing has seen its last appearance on a hydroplane race course. Instead, the boat will live out its years giving injured first responders a thrilling opportunity of a lifetime.

The boat was donated by its owners, Jay Leckrone and Denise Garl, to an organization called Healing Heroes With Sports, which was founded by former unlimited competitor Roger D'Eath. During the coming months, the boat will be converted to outboard power and seats will be added to give heroes the experience of riding in a hydroplane at over 100 mph.

"Three years ago, I formed Healing Heroes With Sports to give back to those who have served our country with honor and dignity," explained D'Eath. "My goal was to take these American heroes for rides on the Detroit River and other venues across the United States and give them the same sensation I had while racing hydroplanes."

The boat first appeared in 1996 as the *PICO American Dream* and won two races with Dave Villwock driving. The following year it won three with Mark Evans at the controls. It last appeared in 2015 as the *Miss DiJulio*. ❖



Kevin LeClair

The Centurion Racing hull was hauled to Detroit, where it will be fitted with four seats and will be powered by outboard engines to give people rides.

## We love to hear from our readers

*I read with great interest the article that your late friend Michael Prophet started, and Bob Senior and you great people finished! I absolutely loved reading the great article! I fell in love with unlimited hydroplanes in 1963. But, to me the summer of '66 was so tragic for unlimited hydroplanes, but U-3 Harrah's Tahoe Miss with Mira Slovak at the wheel won the Gold Cup and three more races to claim national champion. Remember Slovak was second in Seattle and when he came to the microphone he said, "I don't speak English" the crowd roared! Ah yes, great memories of U-3 Harrah's Tahoe Miss, Mira Slovak, and William F. Harrah.*

Paul D. Lichtenberg

## THE 2018 H1 UNLIMITED RACING SEASON

June 1 ..... Spring Training; Tri-Cities, Washington  
 June 22-24..... Guntersville Lake Hydrofest; Guntersville, Alabama  
 July 6-8..... Indiana Governor's Cup; Madison, Indiana  
 July 27-29 ..... HAPO Columbia Cup; Tri-Cities, Washington  
 August 3-5 ..... Albert Lee Cup; Seattle, Washington  
 August 24-26..... Metro Detroit Chevy Dealers APBA Gold Cup; Detroit, Michigan  
 September 14-16 ..... HomeStreet Bank Bayfair; San Diego, California

# UNJ INTERVIEW: David Williams: Memories of Mira.

Mira Slovak escaped from Communist Czechoslovakia with a planeload of passengers, was an air racer and stunt-show pilot, and became one of hydroplane racing's most beloved drivers.

*David Williams, the executive director of the Hydroplane and Race Boat Museum, has written a book about the life of Mira Slovak that will be available in a few weeks. In the following discussion, Williams recalls the time he spent with Slovak as he was gathering information for the book. The conversation took place in Williams' office at the Hydro Museum and was recorded by Craig Fjarlie on March 22 of this year.*

**UNJ: When you met with Mira Slovak to do the book, what were some of the things that you learned about him that you didn't know?**

Williams: First of all, just to give you a little background, like all of us in hydroplanes, I knew of him as a kid. He and I didn't meet until whenever it was that the *Exide* team came back with the boat from Detroit, the two-wing boat. Mira came, I guess I saw him at San Diego that year. We talked and I told him what I was doing. Then, when we began the *Wahoo* replica, he would fly into town a couple times to look at the progress on the boat and at that point we became pretty good friends. He came to a few events that we had here at Seattle and also Chelan and Coeur d'Alene and I got to spend quite a bit of time with him.

He loved to tell stories and I love to listen to stories. So he began to tell me stories and at one point



David Williams (right) with Mira Slovak as he sits in the cockpit of the Hydroplane Museum's *Miss Wahoo* replica in 2011.

I'd run up to him, "Hey, could I write a book about you?" I showed him the Mark Evans book and a few others. And he said no. He had a book in the works that was being written in Czechoslovakia, in the Czech language, and that was only going to deal with the espionage portion of his life in Czechoslova-

kia, developing the plot to escape, and his escape. It was going to end with his escape. I said, "Well, that's not really what people in America are going to be that excited about reading." He said, "I don't care. I need people to know that story. Everybody knows the hydroplane story. That's the story I want told



Mira Slovak in 1956

because that's the story that people know the least about."

But in his home in Czechoslovakia. There are two different views. One is that he's a criminal who stole an airplane, you know, hijacked an airplane, and the other is that he was a patriot. He had a fairly well-known Czech author who dealt very much with history and espionage during the Communist occupation. That was this author's area that he likes to write in.

The author ended up doing some other things and Mira came back to me in February of 2014. He said, "OK, I'll take you up on the... I'd like you to write the book. But, you need to know I have terminal cancer and I probably don't have long to live." So that was kind of a shock. I didn't know that Mira was sick and, to be honest, my feelings were a little hurt when he said, "No, I don't want you to write the book." So, we began to correspond back and forth by email in February of 2014. At that point I'd outlined my take on what we wanted to do with the book and began to ask him questions. I'm trying to remember dates. When it became obvious in May that he wasn't going to last

much longer, I flew down and spent a week with him. He had a beautiful home. Lived in a big house with a swimming pool and a lemon orchard and lots of beautiful flowers. It was in Fallbrook, California.

#### Fallbrook?

Fallbrook. And Mira was very adamant that he wanted a couple things to be said. One, it needed to be the whole story. It needed to tell about the Nazi occupation and some things that his family did during the Nazi occupation. And, it needed to address the Communist years and his escape and his work with the CIA. And then after that was all talked about, then hydroplanes and air racing and then stunt flying and it had to be the whole story. He was very worried that the story is pretty hard to believe.

#### Yeah.

I mean, he wanted me to make sure that everything we put in it we were able to document. And the book is very well documented. Huge, 10 pages of bibliography in the back, all the interviews and all the different books. The story is very well documented. As far as things that I didn't know about Mira, there were hundreds of them. Some stories I was not able to use in the book. When I'd talk with Mira and we'd figure out all the

stories he wanted to tell, and I wrote it, the book was well over 600 pages.

#### Wow.

And I dealt with a structural editor from New York, a very successful editor named Bill Thompson. When he read the book, he said, "All right, great story, but I've got a question for you. It's clear what you say about Mira, and you're telling all of Mira's stories, but this book will never get published. You could self-publish it, but this book will never get published. If you want to be faithful to Mira and tell all of the stories, this book is going to spend the next 30 years in the bottom of your underwear drawer. When you die your kids are going to be pulling out your dresser drawer and go, 'Oh, Gee, here's dad's book' and throw it in the trash. If you want a book that is going to be read by a lot of people, that is going to be bought by a publisher and published, you need to cut it down to at least 400 pages. You need to take 200 pages out." Oh, I need to take 200 pages out! And so, I ended up taking out some of what are really cool stories, but didn't lead anywhere.

A couple of the stories that are left in, that you will read in the book—I don't want to spoil too



Bob Carver

Mira Slovak literally flies the *Miss Wahoo* across the surface of Lake Chelan during the 1957 Apple Cup.



Bob Carver



Bob Miller

[Top] Mira Slovak at the controls of the new *Miss Bardahl* in 1958.  
[Above] Slovak gets a kiss from the queen after the 1958 Sahara Cup while the race winner, Don Wilson, looks on.

much of the ending—but, Mira’s family was very, um, they weren’t necessarily, during the German occupation, involved in the anti-Nazi underground. But they did work to shelter two Jewish families the majority of the war. Mira’s mother ran a saloon that was half of their house and entertained German troops in the saloon, when they had two Jewish families living underneath the saloon in the basement.

**Wow!**

That’s a story that was important to Mira because after he defected to the U.S., the Commu-

nists told stories about oh, the Slovaks, they were Nazi sympathizers. They had all those Germans in the house all the time, they had the saloon, they were Nazi sympathizers. And, you know, Mira said, “Clearly we weren’t, we were hiding Jews in the basement. Build a fence close, enemies closer, it was better to keep a relationship with the occupying soldiers and know who they were and be friendly with them.” So that was one story that makes it in the book.

**Mm hmm.**

A story that does not make it in

the book is that Mira spoke several languages. He spoke German, he spoke English, he spoke Czech, and he spoke Slovakian, which is a different language than Czech. When Mira was in the Air Force, there was a tremendous amount of societal guilt, if you will, among the Czech people, for how little they had done to help the Jews who were deported and executed. Auschwitz was right across the Czech border with Poland. There were people in the Czech government, too, that felt bad. So, when Israel declared independence and was trying to build an air force, the Czech Air Force quickly sold the Israeli Air Force a whole lot of... they were Spanish-built, actually they were Czechoslovakian-built Me-109s. And so, the Israelis sent about 30 pilots to the Czech Air Force to get trained in how to fly these planes. Most of those folks were German-speaking, because they had survived. They’d been in Germany, they survived the concentration camps. They migrated to Israel to fight for a free Israel. So they were sent to Czechoslovakia to learn how to fly. Very few of the Czech officers in charge of training knew how to speak German. So, they tapped Mira and Mira was the person who trained the first 30 fliers for the Israeli Air Force.

**Hmmm.**

When you look at sort of military history and what the Israeli Air Force has gone on to do, Mira Slovak was their first guy who trained them on how to fly. So, that didn’t make it in the story. That was in the original 600-page version and that got cut for expediency.

I’m trying to think of specific stories that aren’t well known. The escape was really more complicated than you might think. Mira was a pilot flying for the Czechoslovakian Air Lines and he was well-trusted. In fact, he was one of the charter



Slovak briefly sat at the controls of the *Miss Pay 'n Save* in 1959.

pilots that flew the Soviet bloc Olympic team to the Helsinki Olympics and he was one of the few pilots allowed to fly outside of Communist territory. At any point he wanted, when he was in Copenhagen or Helsinki, he just could have taken a taxi to the U.S. embassy and said, "I want out."

**Yeah.**

He had committed to friends in the underground that he was going to get them out. When he hijacked the plane, it wasn't so much that he was flying to freedom, because he could do it. He could defect any time he wanted when he was on the other side of the Iron Curtain. But he was bringing people with him. He was bringing them their freedom. The matter was much more involved with the CIA and initially with the CIC, the Counter-Intelligence Corps. When he first defected he was debriefed by the CIC and then turned over to the CIA. Central Intelligence Agency is civilian; CIC was military. But he was much more involved with them than most of us ever knew.

**OK.**

So those are non-boat racing stories. As for boat racing stories, Mira applied for the job of driving

*Harrah's Tahoe Miss* in 1963. That's one of the reasons he ended up with the job in '66. Before he took the *Exide* job, he wanted to look at all his options and he heard that Harrah also was going to build a new boat in '63, 'cause they were getting rid of the *Maverick* hull. So he applied for the job. Harry Volpi essentially sent him back a letter that went, "Too late, we just hired Chuck Thompson. I wish I'd known earlier."

So that was interesting. Also, he was asked to drive the *Stars and Stripes* jet boat. He never did.



Hydroplane and Raceboat Museum

In 1963, Slovak was hired to drive the brand-new *Miss Exide*. The boat was destroyed during the Diamond Cup early in the season.

It crashed during the Staudacher testing. Then they put a radio control in it. It crashed before Mira got an opportunity to drive that one. At any rate, he never ended up driving either of those boats, but he was very interested in driving. I'm kind of rambling, do you have more specific questions?

**Maybe during the time you spent with him, he was a friendly, outgoing person in a lot of ways. Just in terms of his personality.**

He was incredibly charismatic. He joked, I've heard two different sides of this. Russ Schlee once told me, "You know, Mira never met a woman who didn't fall in love with him." And Mira told me, "Yeah, I never met a woman I didn't fall in love with." (Laughter.)

He was very charismatic and very charming. Not the sleazy, players sort of way. And he was very gracious. The last actual interaction I had with him, we spent just... you have to imagine this beautiful ranch-style home in the hills of California surrounded by all sorts of gorgeous flowers. It was springtime. We would sit out by the pool and his partner, Ingrid, would bring us mixed drinks and feed us at the pool and we would talk into the wee hours, late at night. Then, at

some point, he'd think of something and we'd go into his office. His office was just like this (gestures), stack of papers and he'd look around and he'd find something. He would pull out a stack of photographs and he'd go through and look at photographs or documents. So it was a wonderful, wonderful time.

As I was leaving to catch my plane, he sort of held up a hand. "Hold on, hold on." He went back into the house and he got a water bottle, he filled it up with water, and then he went to his rose garden. He looked through all of the roses and he found a beautiful, long-stemmed red rose. He took out some scissors and he cut the rose and he trimmed the leaves off and made it just perfect. Took the lid off the bottle and he stuck the rose in the bottle and he said, "Here, you take this to Linda."

**Oh!**

So I flew home from California cradling this water bottle with a rose sticking out of it. He was very charming and very gracious. Tremendous cook, he loved to cook. He loved to entertain. There is a story that appears in the book, but also is pretty well known. It was in



Hydroplane and Raceboat Museum

Slovak accepts the Gold Cup trophy after winning the race on the Detroit River in 1966.



Tony Bugeja Collection



Sandy Ross Collection

[Top] Slovak won the national champion while driving the *Tahoe Miss* in 1966. [Above] His last competitive drive in an unlimited came aboard the auto-powered *Miss Chrysler Crew* in 1967.

a boat racing magazine story when they were going after the world speed record in '66. He cooked dinner for the crew. They were in Tahoe going for the record and Mira's birthday was coming up. More or less for his birthday he cooked dinner for the entire crew. He, uh, had success in the airplane racing world.

**Um hmm.**

I guess one thing that I learned, we knew that the airplane racing world was sort of an offshoot of the hydroplane world, but it's really an offshoot. I mean, the sport of unlimited air racing was revived by two boat racers, by Chuck Lyford and Bill Stead. The first several years of racing, all of the officials were boat racers and the rules were

directly out of boat racing including Heat A and Heat B and 400 points for first place and all that stuff. He was very successful, he won the very first Reno Air Race.

But the airplane fans were not as appreciative as the hydro fans. He was very touched by how, if you went back to an airplane race, people would recognize him and they may want to argue about certain fine points of airplane history. But come back to hydroplane racing, he was like God. People asked for his autograph; he was very, very touched by that. Any more questions?

**Well, we've covered a lot of what we were planning to do. Are you looking forward to the book coming out?**

I am thrilled to have the book come out. It's a process that, um, I've known Mira, I guess I met him during the second round of *Exide* days. But he and I became close friends in '98. So, from '98 to 2014, we were good friends. Then in 2014, February of 2014 he said "Yes." And from February until October I did massive amounts of research. I can tell you that I read something in the neighborhood of 50 books.

**Wow.**

I have done a tremendous amount of interviews prior to it. During the time that I was going to mainly write, I interviewed Chuck

Lyford several times, interviewed Bill Boeing, and Don Vance who was his crew chief on the *Mr. Mennen* airplane and, you know, just an extraordinary amount of research for that period of time. Then I wrote from October 2014 to September 2016. So, about two years to write. Then from September of 2016 I began to work on publishing. So there has been eight months of research, 24 months of writing, and now about 16 months of editing, re-editing, and submitting, working to get it published.

I'm excited that it's, um, I don't know how to say this without sounding like I'm talking down to

anyone. There's a self-publishing world now that's very credible and really, really good products. The commercial publishing world is shrinking, but to be able to get something published in the commercial world was for me just a real sense of accomplishment. There haven't been a whole lot of hydroplane books commercially published. I'm really proud of that. I'm really looking forward to it coming out. I'm looking forward to hearing how people respond to Mira's story.

There's part of me that... everything that you do, if you restore boats, or you do commercials, or whatever, there's a group of people that, "Aw, that's not right, that's not good enough. I would have done it differently." So, I know there's going to be a certain amount of that. A certain amount of people carping, "Oh, there's not enough hydro stories in it." When I had to cut 200 pages out, I had to change, you know, there are some races, uh, the '59 Gold Cup. I typed about 20 pages about some really neat stories in the '59 Gold Cup, but I can't write about every single Gold Cup. I basically went, "OK, I can write a big story about his first Gold Cup and then the one he won in '66, and the rest of 'em, I've just got to change from a nice, long 20-page story to about a two-paragraph reference.

So there's a lot of stuff on the cutting room floor that would have been nicer to tell, but I think if I left that all in there, the market would be reduced to just hydroplane fans. I'm hoping that we have hydroplane fans and airplane racing fans and history fans and Czech ex-patriot community and I'm hoping we get an audience that's beyond just our family, so to speak.

**All right. Thank you.**

All right. ❖



Karl Pearson



Karl Pearson

The 81-year-old Mira Slovak drove the replica of his Miss Wahoo in 2011. [Top] He tightens the straps on his helmet before firing up the engine. [Above] Then cruises onto Lake Washinton in Seattle.



# TIME CAPSULE: Looking back at the sport's history.

*Each spring, we travel back in time to take a glimpse at the long history of unlimited hydroplane racing. The sport has covered quite a distance in that time, from long and narrow powerboats that cut their way through the water at speeds of about 20 miles per hour, to exotic and colorful machines that scream across the water's surface at almost 200 miles per hour. As we prepare for the 2018 season, let's look at what happened 100, 75, 50, and 25 years ago.*

by A.J. Muntz

## 100 YEARS AGO The 1918 Season

When the legendary Gar Wood won the 1917 Gold Cup on the Mississippi River in Minneapolis, Minnesota, with his *Miss Detroit II*, he not only took the prestigious trophy back to the Motor City, he also returned with a wild idea.

In getting ready for that race, Wood had watched the hometown *Miss Minneapolis* make a test run using an airplane engine. The attempt had failed spectacularly, with the engine coming apart just as all the experts thought it would. Airplane engines were simply too fragile for the beating they would take in a race boat, they reasoned. But, Wood was nevertheless intrigued by the notion of an engine that pound for pound would give him such an incredible advantage in power.

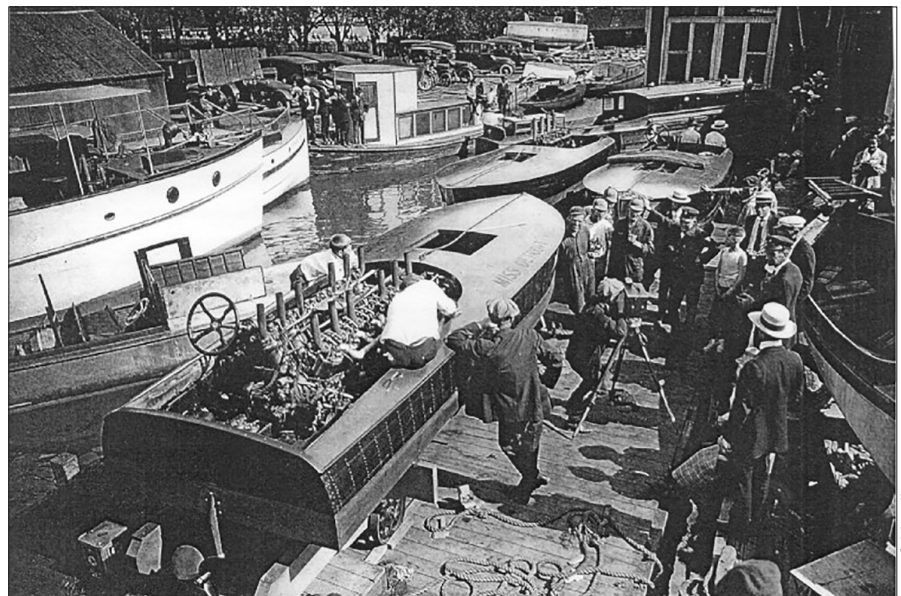
During the offseason, Wood contacted the aviation pioneer Glenn Curtiss and purchased a 12-cylinder airplane engine called a Curtiss V-4, modified it for marine use, and installed it in a new Chris Smith boat that was named *Miss*

*Detroit III*. The result was an engine that produced 400 horsepower, compared with the 250 horsepower produced by the Sterling Model R engine in the *Miss Detroit II*, yet weighed 400 pounds less.

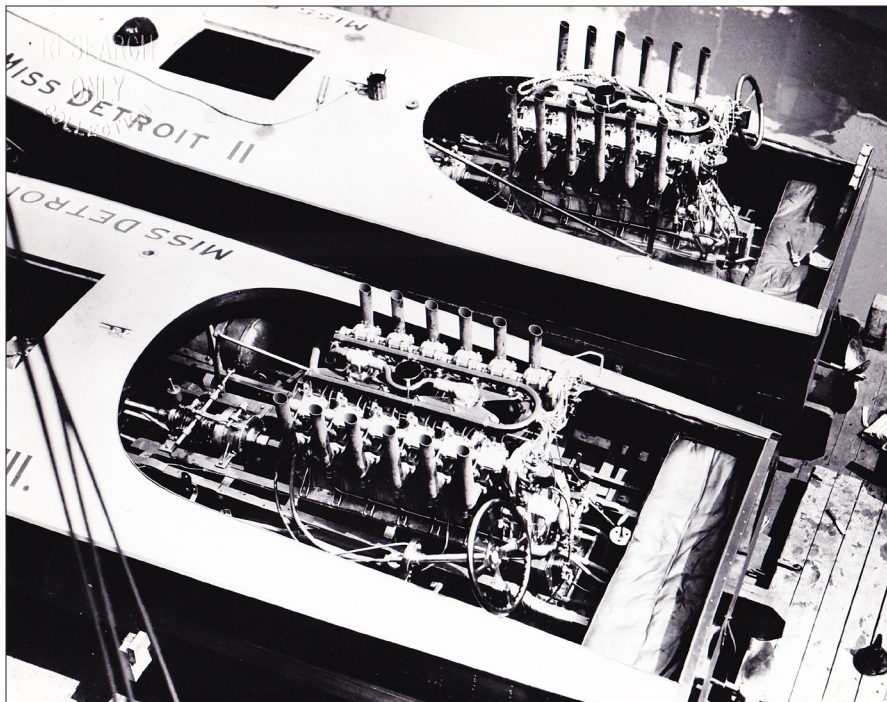
With World War I at its height during the summer of 1918, only four boats showed up for the Gold Cup race on the Detroit River that year. Three of the four represented the Wood family. Defending champion Gar Wood was at the helm of the new *Miss Detroit III*, his brother George piloted the *Miss Detroit II*,

and two other Wood brothers, Winfield and Louis, drove the *Miss Minneapolis*. Their challenger was *Whip-po-Will*, which was campaigned by Albert L. Judson, who also happened to be the president of the American Power Boat Association.

Judson's boat was much larger than the others and on the first day, seemed to glide effortlessly across the water. The *Miss Detroit III*, on the other hand, pushing the known limit for cramming horsepower into a small hull, careened around



The docks along the shore of the Detroit River during the 1918 Gold Cup. The *Miss Detroit III* is in the foreground and beyond it are the other Gar Wood entries, the *Miss Detroit II* and the *Miss Minneapolis*.



Rosenfeld Collection

The *Miss Detroit III*, with its 12-cylinder Curtiss V-4 engine, became the first hydroplane to win the Gold Cup while powered with an aircraft engine. Behind it is the *Miss Detroit II*, which was powered by a conventional Sterling Model R engine.

the course like a pinball, smashing into waves, throwing gushers of spray into the air, and seemingly on the verge of breaking into pieces. Hanging on with all their might, Wood and his riding mechanic Jay Smith drove their boat in spurts, dashing to almost 70 mph for a few minutes and then slowing down for another minute or two to catch their breath and work their hands so the flow of blood could return to their knuckles.

Despite their rough ride, Wood and Smith piloted their boat to easy victories in both of the first two races, which left them in position of having only to place third in the final race to clinch a second straight Gold Cup. Consequently, Wood didn't dare push his boat on the final day. Content to let his brother George battle with the *Whip-po'Will*, Gar Wood cruised easily well behind and, when the *Miss Detroit II* dropped out with a broken connecting rod, ended up crossing the finish line second.

Gar Wood's victory marked a significant milestone in the sport. It was the first time the Gold Cup was won by a boat powered with an aircraft engine, something that would become standard for the next 100 years and beyond.

## 75 YEARS AGO The 1943 Season

Well, okay. There actually wasn't a racing season in 1943. With World War II in full swing and with fuel being used for the war effort, all racing activity was canceled. The only action taking place that can be tied to unlimited hydroplane racing would be the performance of the engines that would be used in the boats a few years later and that would become the backbone of the sport for the following four decades.

In 1943, for example, Allison engines like those that would one day be heard on hydroplane race-

courses were powering the P-38 Lightning fighter planes that on April 18 over Bougainville in the Solomon Islands ambushed and shot down a transport plane that was carrying Japanese Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto. Rolls-Royce Merlin engines like those that would power hydroplanes were starting to be installed in the P-51B Mustang in June, thus creating what would become one of the best fighter planes used during the war.

## 50 YEARS AGO The 1968 Season

Known as one of the most tumultuous years in American history, 1968 is still remembered for many major events. Only a couple of days after the unlimited hydroplane season opened in Guntersville, Alabama, the nation was rocked by the assassination of Robert Kennedy. Shortly after the boats left Washington, D.C., following the President's Cup race, there were riots in the streets of Chicago in conjunction with the Democratic National Convention. And, on the day after the season's final race in Phoenix, the first Boeing 747 took off from Paine Field north of Seattle to begin the era of the Jumbo Jet.

As for the unlimited hydroplanes, the biggest issue of 1968 was safety. Following the deaths of Ron Musson, Don Wilson, Rex Manchester, and Chuck Thompson in 1966 and then of Bill Brow the following year, boat owners and designers were trying hard to find a way to make the boats more stable on the water.

Lee Schoenith, the owner of the Gale Enterprises race team, was particularly concerned and produced a boat that was perhaps the most noteworthy example of that effort: the *Smirnoff*. He had hired

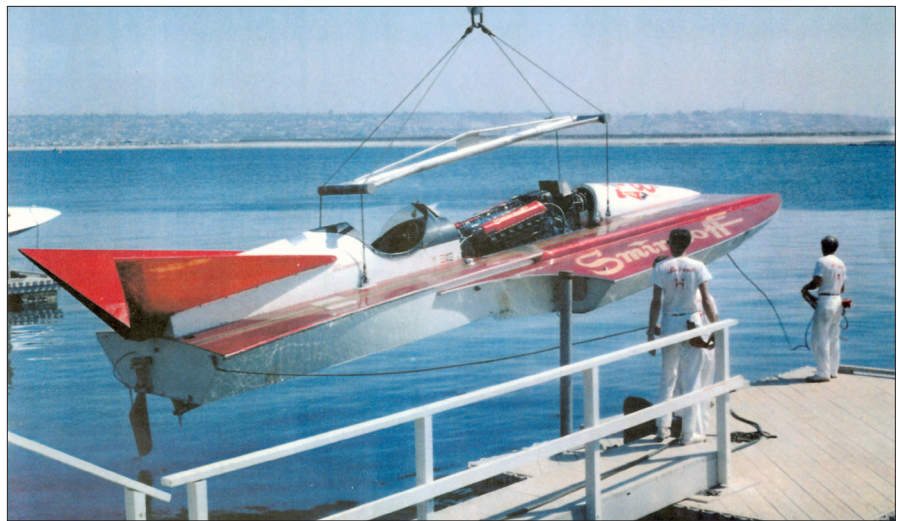
a designer named Dick Brantsner to create a boat that would be safer than the others and, using computer technology and a home-built wind tunnel, produced an oddly shaped craft with an aero-dynamic venting system, a wider-than-normal rear deck area to improve stability, and a pair of tails set in a butterfly-wing arrangement that was supposed to guide the boat like the feathers on an arrow.

But, the boat's most significant feature was its bow. It didn't have the rounded front end like the other boats. Instead, Brantsner had lopped the bow off to a stub in an attempt to reduce lift and prevent the kind of nose-in accident that had killed Chuck Thompson. The front of the sponsons jutted forward beyond the deck on either side, giving the feature the name "pickle fork." The *Harrah's Club*, the national champion two years before, also appeared in 1968 with a pickle-fork bow.

As things turned out, the new *Smirnoff* was probably too safe to be competitive. Despite being driven by a rookie named Dean Chenoweth, who would become one of the best drivers the sport has ever known, the boat raced like a dreadnaught, so heavy and stable that it wouldn't break free of the water and go fast.

Meanwhile, as the season got underway, the biggest surprise was the *Miss Eagle Electric* with Warner Gardner at the wheel. The boat had competed the previous six seasons as the *\$ Bill*, but without any race victories to its credit, but suddenly became a winner when the hard-charging Gardner got in the cockpit. He drove the boat to an easy victory in the Dixie Cup in Guntersville, then added wins in the Atomic Cup at the Tri-Cities, Washington, and in the President's Cup before heading to the Gold Cup in Detroit.

Gardner won the first prelim-



Eileen Crimmin



Hydroplane and Raceboat Museum



Sandy Ross Collection

[Top] The brand-new *Smirnoff* in 1968 with its unusual butterfly tails. [Middle] Warner Gardner stands on the deck of the *Miss Eagle Electric* as it rests near the dock at Detroit in 1968. Gardner would later be killed while driving the boat in that race. [Above] The pit area at the 1968 Gold Cup in Detroit. In the foreground is the *Smirnoff* with its pickle-fork bow. Behind it is the *Gale's Roostertail*, *My Gypsy*, and *Notre Dame*.

## 25 YEARS AGO The 1993 Season

Let's just say that the ultimate outcome of the 1993 season was never in doubt. The *Miss Budweiser* team had won the previous two national titles and would not be denied in its effort to win a third.

That was assured by a strategy where the team hauled two boats to every race site and, after test runs and considering the water conditions, decided which of the two had the best opportunity to win that weekend. The procedure netted victories in seven of the 10 races held that year, four being claimed by the older hull (#8701) and three by its newer sister (#8901). Along the way, *Budweiser* driver Chip Hanauer also won his ninth Gold Cup.

One of the season's best surprises was the performance of the U-6 *Kellogg's Frosted Flakes*, a



Byron Lang



Eileen Crimmin

[Top] The *Miss Bardahl* won its second straight national title in 1968 with Billy Schumacher at the wheel. The boat featured a checker-board paint job that year. [Above] Finishing second in the national standings was *My Gypsy* with Tommy Fults driving. It's shown here leading the U-10 *Savair's Mist* at Seattle.

inary heat and finished second behind Bill Sterett in the *Miss Budweiser* in the second. During the final heat of that race, Garner chased Sterett through the first three laps, but then entered the tight turn at the upstream end of the course too hard. The boat pitched onto its right side, rolled over, and landed upside down in a blast of spray. Gardner was pulled from the water with severe head injuries and died in the hospital the next day.

The deadly tally had reached six drivers in three seasons.

In the end, the 1968 season belonged to Billy Schumacher and the

*Miss Bardahl*, who won their second straight national title. Carrying a distinctive yellow and black checkerboard paint job, the boat won four races: the Gold Cup, the Wisconsin Cup, the Indiana Governor's Cup, and the Diamond Cup.

Finishing second in the national standings was Tommy Fults in the *My Gypsy*, which won only in San Diego, but collected another five finishes that were within the top three. Gardner and the *Eagle Electric* had enough points to be third in the standings, just ahead of Bill Sterett in the *Miss Budweiser*, which won the year's final race in Phoenix.



Hydroplane and Raceboat Museum

The U-6 *Kellogg's Frosted Flakes* was campaigned by the city of Madison, Indiana, and driven by Mike Hanson.

race team operated by the town of Madison, Indiana, but with a big-name sponsor lending its support. With Mike Hanson at the wheel, the boat finished in the top four at every race on the circuit and earned a victory at San Diego, the first for the Madison race team since 1983. Admittedly, that win was helped along by the fact that Hanauer was penalized a lap in the final heat, another was disqualified, and two more went dead in the water with mechanical issues.

The other two race victories during the year went to Steve David driving the *Miss T-Plus*, who won both the season opener in Lewisville, Texas, and the season closer at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. Its performance in the other races wasn't enough to surpass Mark Tate in the *Winston Eagle*, however, who finished third in the final national standings, or to surpass the *Tide*, which finished fourth.

Another remarkable characteristic of the 1993 season was a certain degree of aerobatics by the boats. There seemed to be a remarkable number of blow-overs and flips. The *Miss Circus Circus* barrel rolled in Detroit, the *Tide* did a complete loop at Kansas City, the *Miss Circus Circus* went over in the Tri-Cities then the *Tide* flipped again later that day, and the *Winston Eagle* went airborne in Seattle. Perhaps the most memorable of the incidents that year came at Madison when the escape hatch on the cockpit floor of the *Budweiser* suddenly opened, allowing a blast of Ohio River water to batter Hanauer's body like the torrent from a fire hose.

Luckily, there were no major injuries as a result of any of the accidents. ❖

*Portions of the above are excerpts from A.J. Muntz's book "At the Ragged Edge."*



P.J. Krol



Hydroplane and Raceboat Museum



Hydroplane and Raceboat Museum

[Top] The 1993 national champion, the *Miss Budweiser* (Hull #8701) on its way to victory in the Gold Cup on the Detroit River. [Middle] *Budweiser* driver Chip Hanauer celebrates the Gold Cup win, his ninth, while team owner Bernie Little looks on (right). [Above] The *Winston Eagle* with Mark Tate driving finished the season third in the national standings behind *Kellogg's Frosted Flakes*.

# HydroFile

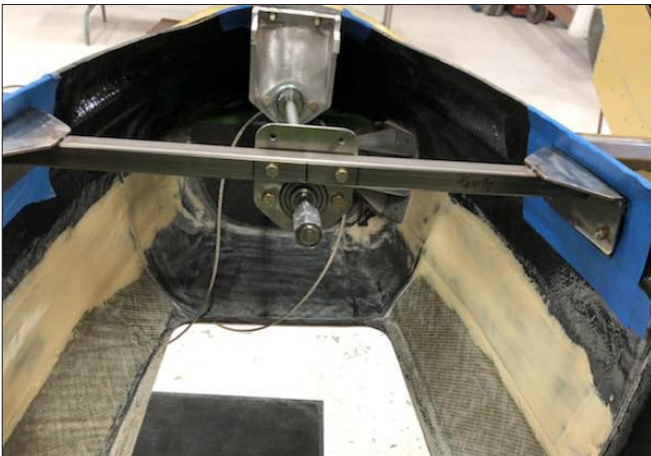
Race Team News



Lon Erickson

## U-1 HomeStreet Racing

Crewmember Trey Holt and H1 provided some shots of progress on the new U-1 as the Hanson's and Dale Van Wierengen continue work on the hull. Steering rigging, cockpit layout, and completing the main hull is all underway. The current 2017 race boat is also at the shop in Tukwila, Washington, for reference and parts duplication. A major team and crew re-structure has taken place. See the story on the front page of this issue.



Cockpit layout



H1 Unlimited



Hull rigging

Trey Holt

Trey Holt Photos

## U-2/U-7 Bartush/Spirit of Detroit

After work on the major rebuild of Dave Bartush's U-2 hull wrapped up at Henderson Hydroplanes in Ontario, the U-2 was taken to the Bartush shop in Detroit where work continues with the completion of hardware and systems installations. The boat underwent major sponson renovations and upgrades, was lightened up by about 550 pounds, the weight and balance was re-configured, the front spar was redesigned, and the placement of the rear wing was changed. The 2017 U-7 is now at Henderson Hydroplanes to undergo repairs to the damage it suffered during last season's Gold Cup. Attention will focus on the cockpit rebuild, skidfin bracket updates, and front control surfaces.



Bert Henderson Photos

## Go3 Racing

With the majority of the engine work completed, Ed Cooper has brought the Go3 hull out of the race shop storage and moved it into the main bay to begin preparations for the 2018 season. Participation in the full 2018 circuit is sponsor dependent, but the Tri-Cities Columbia Cup race is already in the plans. From Charlie Grigg/Ace Hardware: "Starting to work on the associate sponsors for the *Miss Ace Hardware* for 2018 and Go3 Racing Team." Charlie reports many of the sponsors from last year are returning, but the team is still looking for additional sponsors.



Go3 Racing

## U-12 Racing/Graham Trucking

The *Graham Trucking* crew has begun their off-season work on the U-12 in preparation of the season. With a major rebuild already done last winter, this spring will be more fine tuning and applying things learned while running in 2017. They are currently going through the hull, checking for any issues, making repairs as needed, and rebuilding spare parts.



Graham Trucking Racing Photos

Go3 Racing Photos

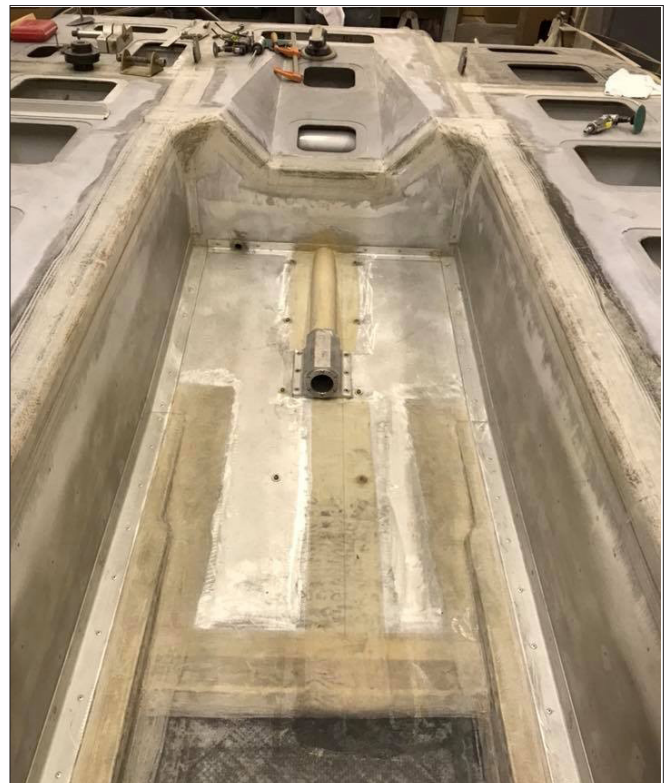


## U-21/U-48 Go Fast Turn Left Racing

The GFTL team has taken a vote and the new hull will be registered as the U-48. An O'Farrell U-48 number first appeared on one of their Lakeridge Paving sponsored hulls in 2007. Progress continues on the new hull with cockpit hardware, brackets, and decking going into the boat. The team is scheduled for another "crew weekend" with all hands on deck, working on both GFTL hulls and an appearance at the H1 testing in June.



[Top] Cockpit. [Middle] Cockpit pedal layout.  
[Above] Rudder bracket



Go Fast Turn Left Racing

## U-27 Wiggins Racing

Milt and Charlie Wiggins' U-27 team has been quiet over the winter, but here is the new look for the boat for 2018. It is making some display appearances, including the Indy car race at Barber Motorsports Park in Alabama.



Go Fast Turn Left Racing Photos

## U-99.9 Leland Unlimited

Sponsor talks have moved ahead for the Leland team for 2018 as they recently announced: “Welcome back KISW 99.9! Miss Rock returns! KISW 99.9 FM Seattle comes aboard the Leland Unlimited entry.” Repairs to the major damage on the hull is making good progress, with the front spar nearing completion and the rear interior hull repairs coming together. The team is also working on fabrication of new replacement parts, cowling, and the hauler.

Lon Erickson



Lon Erickson



Leland Racing



## 440 Bucket List Racing

With recent acquisition of two newly rebuilt T-53 turbines from Whispering Turbines, spare parts, gearbox improvements, the BLR team continues to step up their racing program. New prop work is also underway for the season. They are “all in” for the 2018 circuit.

Bucket List Racing



Taylor Evans



Bucket List Racing



# My \$0.02 Worth

## Editorial Comment



Andy  
Muntz

Earlier in this issue, we looked back at the history of unlimited hydroplane racing to see what happened 100, 75, 50, and 25 years ago. The story about 1918 is particularly important because it tells us about a change that still remains firmly established. It also tells us a story about what can happen when somebody with tenacity is convinced that he is right, even when the so-called experts say he is wrong.

The sport was only 15 years old in 1918, yet the boats had already changed dramatically. When *Standard* won the first Gold Cup in 1904, the hulls were long and narrow so they could slice their way through the water. But, then came the idea of putting steps on the underside of the boats so they would skip across the surface and go faster. By the time Gar Wood won the 1917 Gold Cup, the boats were generally much shorter and wider than they had been before.

Although the hulls had changed,

the engines weren't much different. The race teams still relied on sturdy marine engines that were built to withstand the abuse of bouncing in and out of the water. Then, in 1917, the owners of the *Miss Minneapolis* tried something different. Hoping for a better power-to-weight ratio, they tried an airplane engine. The experts said it was a stupid idea, that airplane engines were too fragile, and that seemed to be confirmed when the engine exploded parts into the Mississippi River during testing, but Gar Wood was intrigued.

A year earlier, the great aviation pioneer Glenn Curtiss had built a huge flying boat for the British called a Wanamaker Triplane that was designed to use a liquid-cooled engine called the Curtiss V-4, a 12-cylinder (the V-4 means "version four") engine capable of producing 350 horsepower. Unfortunately, they weren't ready in time for delivery, so were replaced

with Rolls-Royce Eagles, which left Curtiss with a couple of those V-4s.

Curtiss had put one of the engines in a boat named *Miss Miami* and was clocked at 66 mph, which got the attention of Gar Wood. So, after the 1917 Gold Cup, Wood contacted Curtiss and convinced him to sell one of the engines. During the winter of 1917-18, Wood shaved more weight from the engine, made it turn faster, installed it in his new *Miss Detroit III*, and proceeded to easily win the Gold Cup.

And, as they say, the rest is history.

Today, 100 years later, the engines used in unlimited hydroplanes still find their origin in aircraft. It's a testament to Gar Wood, one of the greatest competitors this sport has ever known, who showed us what can result if one pursues a good idea, even when the experts say it's folly. ❖

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Letters may be edited for clarity and space.

**PLEASE JOIN US AT THE NEXT MEETING OF UNLIMITEDS UNANIMOUS.**

2 p.m. on Sunday, May 20, 2018

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