



April 2018

UNLIMITED NEWSJOURNAL

A Chronicle of Speed

Bill Harrah's hydroplanes.

Several years ago, the late Michael Prophet, long-time editor of the Unlimited NewsJournal, began to assemble a story about the three hydroplanes that had been campaigned by the pioneering Nevada casino owner William F. Harrah during his unlimited career from 1962 through 1968. With the help of Bob Senior, he not only chronicled the history of the three boats as they raced for Harrah, but for the many years that the hulls competed after that. Here, then, with a little embellishment, is that story:

William F. Harrah was a sportsman of the highest order and a man who transformed the Nevada gambling industry. Born in 1911, he studied mechanical engineering at UCLA, but dropped out of the school during the Great Depression and went to work in a variety of family businesses that included a pool hall, a hot dog stand, and a gaming facility that offered a game very much like Bingo. It wasn't Bingo, mind you, because that was illegal in California at the time, but a game that instead used cards.

Harrah soon grew tired of being hassled by local authorities who constantly tried to shut down his operation, so he moved across the state line to Reno and opened an establishment called Harrah's Club



Hydroplane and Raceboat Museum

Bingo in 1937. That particular club didn't last long because it was in a bad location, but Harrah was eventually accepted by the city's close fraternity of gambling proprietors and bought a larger casino in the

heart of the Reno gambling district.

He purchased The Mint Club in 1946 and renovated it into a hugely successful hotel-casino that became a glittering example for the industry, complete with gourmet

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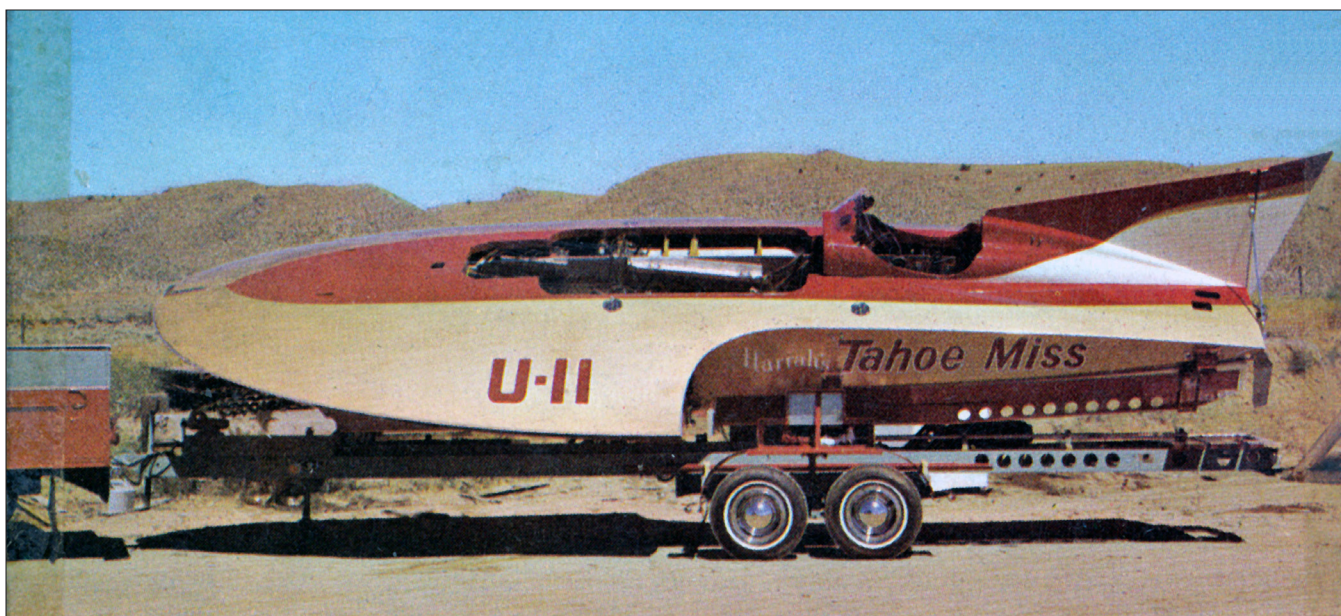
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Hydroplane and Raceboat Museum



Hydroplane and Raceboat Museum



Sandy Ross Collection

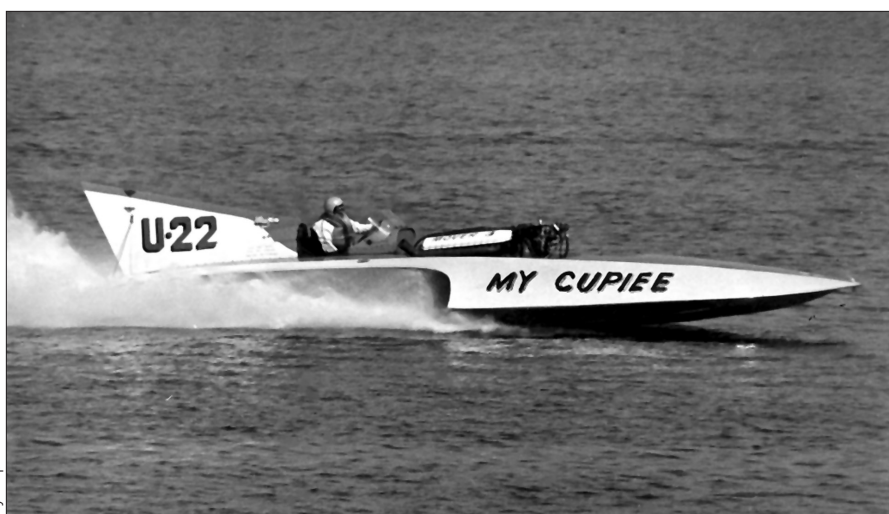
[Top] Bill Harrah's first venture into hydroplane racing came with the purchase of the old *Maverick* hull in 1962. Here, the U-11 *Tahoe Miss* sits on its trailer in Nevada. [Middle] The boat originally raced as the U-00 *Maverick* in 1959 and won five races and the national championship that year. [Above] After being purchased by Bernie Little in 1963, the boat also would become the first to carry the name *Miss Budweiser*, as it appears here in 1964.

restaurants, lavish accommodations, and first-class service. He then opened another club on Lake Tahoe in 1955, the year he helped create the Nevada Gaming Control Board to help improve the bad reputation of the gambling industry.

Along the way, Harrah was married seven times, amassed an extensive collection of rare cars that would eventually establish the National Automobile Museum in Reno, and became interested in the unlimited hydroplanes that had started racing on Lake Tahoe in 1953. He began to sponsor the annual Tahoe race in 1962 and purchased the former *Maverick* hull from William T. Waggoner that same year. It would become the first boat to carry the name *Tahoe Miss*.

Hull #5900

The *Tahoe Miss* started out as the U-00 *Maverick* in 1959. It was owned by William T. Waggoner, designed and built by Ted Jones with some help by his son Ron, and driven by Bill Stead. It was painted gold, red, and white as *Maverick* and won the 1959 Diamond Cup, Gold Cup, Silver Cup, Conner's Memorial, Mapes Trophy,



[Top] Norman Mason bought the hull in 1967 and raced it as the U-22 *Atlas Van Lines*, thus becoming the first boat to carry that famous name, as well. The picture shows Bob Schroeder testing the boat in Seattle before the season. [Middle] After being sold to Jim McCormick, Paul Vinset, and Ray Craig in 1969, the boat entered only the Detroit Memorial race that year and failed to finish. [Above] The boat's final appearances on a racecourse came at Owensboro, Kentucky, and Madison, Indiana, in 1970 with the boat returned to its original name of *Maverick*. Red Hamilton was at the wheel.

and the national championship.

The following year, Waggoner put the boat up for sale and in 1961 sold it to the Reno Regatta Association. Racing as the U-00 *Miss Reno* that season, they entered two races: the World Championship at Seattle and at the APBA Gold Cup at Pyramid Lake where the boat sank with Russ Schlee at the wheel.

The boat was put up for sale again after the season. Bill Harrah purchased it in 1962 and raced it as the first U-11 *Tahoe Miss*, still painted the same colors. It was driven by Russ Schlee, Bob Schroeder, and Chuck Hickling that season. The *Tahoe Miss* was again put up for sale after the season and sat out a year.

The buyer was Bernie Little, a businessman from Lakeland, Florida, who would become one of the most dominant participants the sport has ever seen. Under his ownership, the boat started out as a display boat named the *Florida Miss*, then became the first of many boats over the next 40 years to carry the name *Miss Budweiser*. It debuted at the Dixie Cip in Guntersville, Alabama. Chuck Hickling sank *Miss Budweiser* at San Diego that year and the boat became a display boat until 1967, when it was sold to Norman Mason, who raced it as the U-22 *Atlas Van Lines* while driven by Bob Schroeder.

In the 1968 pre-season, it was named the U-22 *Want-A-Sponsor*, so you know where this is going. Jim McCormick, Paul Vinset, and Ray Craig bought the boat from Jack Love and raced it as the first U-22 *My Cupie* that year and, in 1969, it was driven by Bob Schroeder. In 1970, the boat became the U-22 *Maverick* once again and made its final appearances while driven by C.C. "Red" Hamilton at both Owensboro and Madison.

Jim McCormick said he burned the boat in January of 1976 or '77.

Hull #6303

Bill Harrah had Ted Jones design a new U-3 *Tahoe Miss* for the 1963 season and Jones also supervised the building of the boat by the *Tahoe Miss* crew. This was one of last hydroplanes designed by Ted Jones and measured 31 feet in length, had a beam of 12-feet, 9 inches, and weighed a mammoth 8,000 pounds. It was powered by an Allison engine and driven by Chuck Thompson. The heavy boat was painted red and white.

The boat would only win the Seattle Seafair Trophy race that year, but in the process set the fastest 45-mile race ever run, averaging 109.459 mph. Despite the powerful engine and the excellent driving skills of Thompson, the too-heavy U-3 *Miss Tahoe* was retired after the season and a new boat was built for the following year.

In 1965, the boat was renamed *Tahoe Miss II* and converted into a two-seater so that Bill Harrah could give rides to many popular entertainers, a group that he called Bill Harrah's 100-mph Club. It didn't see competition again until 1974, when Bob Murphy bought it and repainted it mustard gold, white, and red with mahogany. It raced as the U-4 *Kirby Classic* with Bill Wurster at the helm and ran at five events that season.

Bill Wurster purchased the boat the following year and raced it as the U-22 *Sunny Jim Jam* while sporting a white paint job with blue and red trim. Wurster was also the driver and competed in only two events: the Tri-Cities APBA Gold Cup, where it finished 10th, and Seattle's Seafair Trophy, where it failed to qualify.

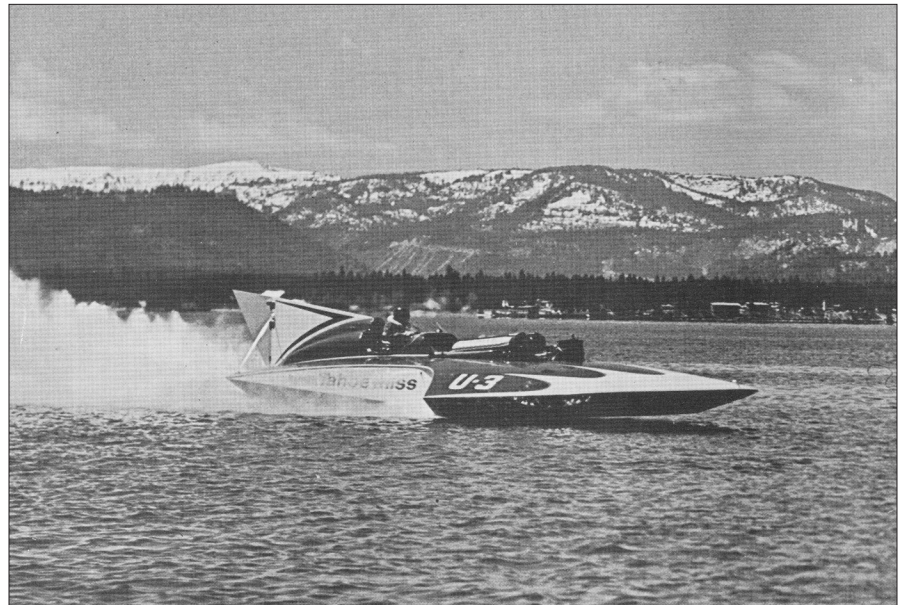
Doug McIntosh and Jim Tutty owned the hull in 1976. The boat

raced as the U-66 *Vagabond* with Bob Miller and Fred Leland as pilots, and as *Ms. Management and Business Seminar* with Miller behind the wheel. In 1977, the boat raced as the U-66 *City of Kent*, *Kirby Classic*, *Sizzler*, *Mark & Pak*, and *Elliott Dog Ration*.

Sometime in the 1980s, the old boat was sold once again, this time to Bruce and Brian Laherty, former crewmembers of Bill Wurster when he owned the boat. Rumors are

that they bought it for the Allison engine.

The hull languished in their backyard near Bothell, Washington, for over 30 years, where it wasted away, rotting in the weather. It would eventually be purchased and immediately traded to a fellow named Jim Dickinson as part of the effort to acquire *The Squire Shop* hull that is currently being restored by the Hydroplane and Raceboat Museum.



Ross Martin



Sandy Ross Collection

[Top] The new *Tahoe Miss* built in 1963 was one of the last to be designed by Ted Jones and turned out to be a whopping 8,000 pounds. As a result of its weight disadvantage, it managed only one race victory in that season.
[Above] Sitting at the controls of the *Tahoe Miss* was Chuck Thompson.



[Bottom Left] Too heavy to be competitive on the racecourse, the boat was replaced by a new *Tahoe Miss* in 1964 and converted to a two-seater so Bill Harrah could give rides to his friends and to the various personalities who performed at his hotel/casinos. [Top Left] Bob Murphy bought the hull in 1974 and raced it as the *Kirby Classic*. [Top Right] The boat was sold again in 1976, this time to Doug McIntosh and Jim Tutty, and was named *Ms. Management and Business Seminar*, among others. [Above Left] In 1977, the boat appeared at the Gold Cup in the Tri-Cities as the *Mark & Pak*, but failed to finish. [Above Right] The boat ended its racing career in Seattle as the *Elliott Dog Ration*, but failed to qualify for the race. [Bottom Right] The old hull sat for many years on property near Bothell, Washington.



Hull #6403

Bill Harrah had a new boat in 1964 that was designed and built by Les Staudacher. It was powered by a V-12 Allison engine, was named the U-3 *Harrah's Tahoe Miss*, and painted two-tone grey with white stripes and lettering. With Chuck Thompson as the driver, the *Harrah's Tahoe Miss* won the Indiana Governor's Cup in Madison, Indiana, that first year. In 1965, the team introduced a turbo-Allison power plant that was developed by former crew chief Everett Adams and nicknamed the "Trashburner."

Thompson won the Spirit of Detroit and Indiana Governor's Cup, then in San Diego the U-3 *Harrah's Tahoe Miss* caught fire and burned. The Coast Guard patrol boat did its best to put out the blaze, but the damage was severe.

Harrah had the Grey Ghost rebuilt over the winter and the hull was repainted bittersweet red and Lakewood green for the 1966 season. Another change came in the cockpit. Thompson was dismissed from the team following the 1965 season and was to be replaced by Buddy Byers, but Byers crashed his limited boat and was injured enough to end his career. Mira Slovak then took over behind the wheel while Chuck Thompson moved to the Gale team to drive the new U-80 *Smirnoff*.

In a season best known for the three tragic deaths that occurred at the President's Cup and the death of Chuck Thompson in Detroit, the *Harrah's* team had a successful year. Mira Slovak and *Harrah's Tahoe Miss* won four races: the Detroit's APBA Gold Cup; Kelowna's British Columbia Cup; Coeur d'Alene, Idaho's, Diamond Cup; and the Indiana Governor's Cup. Then, to top



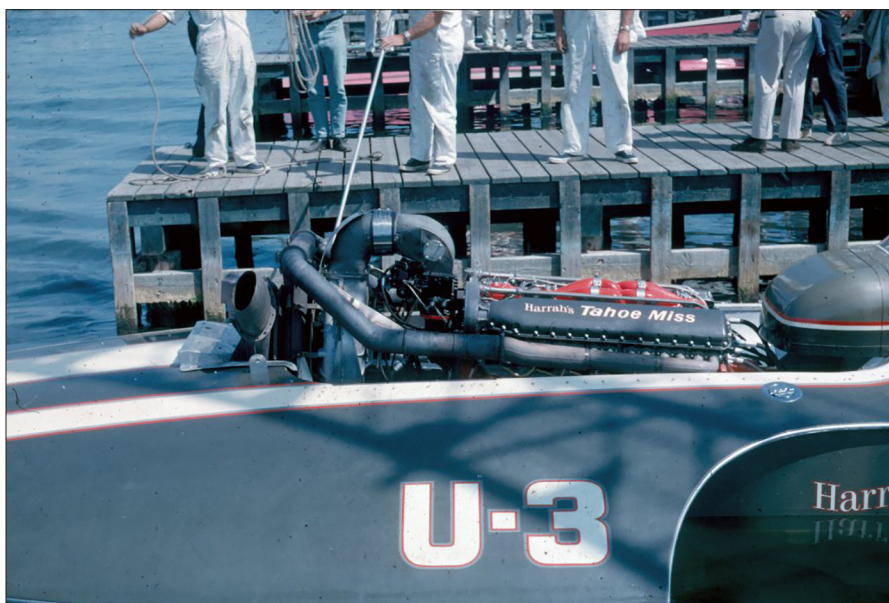
Bob Greenberg



Sandy Ross Collection

[Top] The new *Tahoe Miss* that debuted in 1964 became known as the "Grey Ghost" because of its beautiful two-toned grey color scheme.

[Above] Standing next to driver Chuck Thompson is the team's crew chief, Everett Adams. An engine specialist who would develop the auxiliary-stage turbocharger for the team, he is a long-time resident of Reno, Nevada, and was president of Adams Custom Engines.



things off, they won the national championship.

After the season, Bill Harrah wanted Mira Slovak to make a run at the mile straightaway record. Bernie Little also wanted Bill Brow and *Miss Budweiser* to make an attempt. The site for the mile attempt was Zephyr Cove on Lake Tahoe in late October. It didn't turn out well for either team, though they tried hard.

Team Manager Harry Volpi tested the *Tahoe Miss* on October 19, but had mechanical trouble and they had to change engines. Bad weather on the 20th and 21st prevented any runs on the lake, then on the 22nd, Volpi was unable to reach a plane. More adjustments were made and he went out again. This time it reached a plane, but then the supercharger blew up. He took the carburetor to Oakland and returned at 4:30 p.m. on the 23rd, when another new engine was waiting.

Slovak went out and failed to reach a plane, no matter what he tried. The following day ended with the same results. On the 25th, Slovak convinced Volpi into taking the boat for a test run. He got up on a plane, then blew up the supercharger again.

Things didn't get any better on October 26. Slovak brought Harrah's *Tahoe Miss* quickly back to the beach shortly after reaching a plane because the boat had a leaking fuel line. After a quick repair, they returned to the lake, running with their fifth supercharger since this all started. This time out, Slovak got Harrah's *Tahoe Miss* up to 173 mph and had cut back to 125 mph when the turbocharger exploded and the boat caught fire.

Slovak bailed out of the burning boat and went skipping across the water like a stone. He suffered minor burns and was very sore to



[Top] The auxiliary-stage turbocharger, nicknamed the "Trashburner," that was installed on the team's engine in 1965. [Middle] The *Tahoe Miss* crew poses for a photograph with a beauty queen. [Above] The charred boat after the 1965 fire in San Diego.

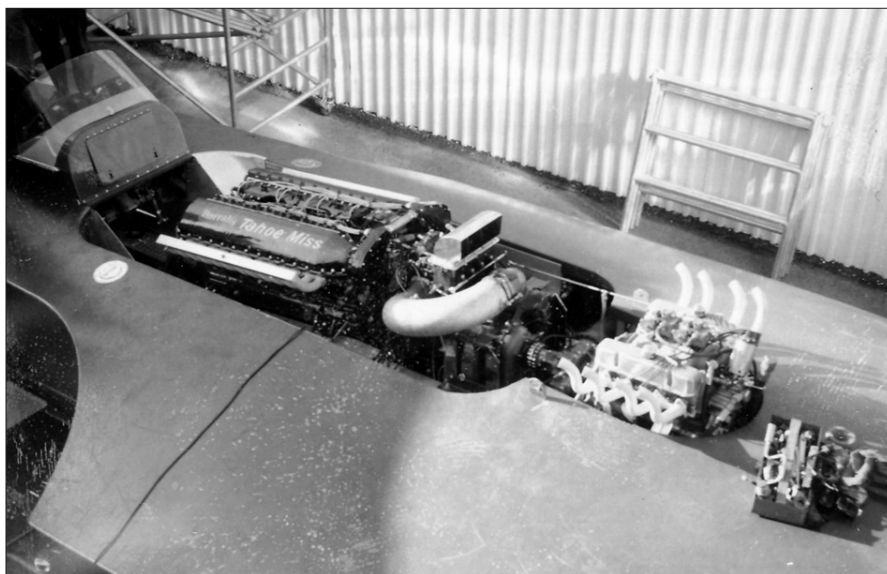


say the least, but was able to drive again. The boat was not seriously damaged from the fire. The team then decided to put in the old, less powerful Allison set-up back in the boat for the next test run, but it didn't change things much. The quill shaft broke on October 30 and that ended their day and the mile attempt. Neither *Miss Budweiser* or *Harrah's Tahoe Miss* came close to the world record.

For 1967, the renumbered and renamed U-1 *Harrah's Club* ran with a V-8 Buick auxiliary engine hooked to the Allison. Chuck Hickling was now behind the wheel because Slovak had a commitment to fly for Continental Airlines that year. The previous season, the 53-year-old Hickling was driving the U-21 *\$Bill*.

The racing season started out badly again. Bill Brow was killed during the first race of the season at Tampa, Florida, while driving *Miss Budweiser*. Meanwhile, *Harrah's Club* ran into serious mechanical problems in the Suncoast Cup then blew more engines in Detroit, but did much better at Madison, finishing second to *Miss Bardahl*. There were more engine problems again at the Tri-Cities.

Back in Seattle again, this time for the Gold Cup, trouble started



[Top] Bill Harrah was apparently superstitious about certain things and insisted that the color of the Grey Ghost be changed in 1966 to help wipe away memories of the fire. [Above] In 1967, the team used a unique engine set-up where a V-8 Buick engine was used to create auxiliary power for the Allison.



Just after crossing the starting line for Heat 1A of the 1967 Gold Cup in Seattle, The *Notre Dame* with Jack Regas behind the wheel hit a big hole in the water and nose-dived, tossing Regas into the Lake Washington. Chuck Hickling was right behind in the *Harrah's Club*. He hit the *Notre Dame*, went flying [left], and also crashed into the lake [right].



[Top] In 1968, the *Harrah's Club* was painted white due to Bill Harrah's superstitions, sported a pickle-fork bow, and a Rolls Griffon engine. [Above] The deep pickle-fork transformed into a blunt-nosed configuration by the time the campaign reached San Diego near the end of the season.

just after the boat crossed the starting line for Heat 1A. About 150 yards down the course, *Notre Dame* hit a large hole in the water, nosedived, and came apart, tossing engine parts, hull fragments, and Jack Regas into Lake Washington.

Hickling, running close behind in *Harrah's Club*, made a choice to run over *Notre Dame* instead of Regas, who was bobbing close by in the water. The boat hit the U-7, leaped into the air, and ejected Hickling a moment later. *Harrah's*

Club and the remains of *Notre Dame* quickly sank to the bottom of Lake Washington.

Both drivers and their teams had high praise for the Coast Guard and the rescue crews involved. Regas was rescued by a Coast Guard helicopter within 15 seconds of the crash and Hickling was rescued by a tender boat pilot who jumped in to hold his head above water 30 seconds after the crash.

"He sure did a good job. I don't know if I could have made it

without him because my jacket was all torn and falling apart," Hickling said. He went to the hospital where he was treated for cuts, broken ribs, and a minor puncture of a lung. Regas was hospitalized with broken ribs. Both boats were resurfaced Monday after the race.

At the time, neither Shirley McDonald nor Bill Harrah had plans to rebuild their broken boats. A new *Notre Dame* was eventually built for next season. As for the *Tahoe* boat, it was rebuilt for 1968. More than once, in fact. The re-numbered U-3 *Harrah's Club* was painted white with red trim for the season and sported a "bobbed" tail and a pickle-fork nose (it had been severely damaged in the 1967 accident). The powerplant also changed to the more powerful Rolls-Royce Griffon engine.

Like the previous year's Allison equipment, the Griffon set-up's staying power was also lacking in durability. Burnett Bartley Jr. started the season behind the wheel, but his success in limiteds didn't make the transition to the unlimited class. *Harrah's Club* finished a dismal 12th, 8th, and 14th in the first three races.

He was replaced by "Gentleman" Jim McCormick at the Tri-Cities race. The crew began slowly modifying the nose, gradually filling in the pickle-fork after the Atomic Cup, and by the time *Harrah's Club* reached San Diego, it had a nearly blunt nose. Though McCormick turned the boat into a contender again, he still had DNFs at the Coeur d'Alene Diamond Cup and at Detroit's APBA Gold Cup. In Seattle, the boat won the day's first heat and the crew changed the engine for the second heat, which it also won. But, that engine blew just after McCormick crossed the finish line and only one engine change was allowed by the rules, which meant that even though it led the

field with 800 points, it had to sit out the final.

The team's best race of the season was Phoenix, where they placed third and finished the season ninth in the National High Points. This was the also the final season for Bill Harrah and the Tahoe team.

The boat remained on the beach until 1971 when Berne Little purchased it and raced it as the U-3 *Budweiser Malt Liquor*. The hull was painted gold and black and still had the Griffon engine. Little entered

the boat in only one race, the Atlas Van Lines Trophy at Dallas, where Terry Sterett drove it to fifth place.

Little put the boat, minus the Griffon equipment, up for sale after the season, but it sat in storage in 1972 before it was finally sold in 1973 to Tom Kaufman. He installed an Allison engine and ran the boat as the U-3 *Mister Fabricator* through 1975.

In 1977, the boat was re-acquired by Harrah's Club in Reno and was going to be restored

to the original name and paint scheme, but that failed to happen for some reason. It instead went to the Hydroplane and Raceboat Museum in 1986. By that time, the old "Grey Ghost" had been sitting in the desert for 10 years and was in rough condition, but in better shape than some of the other old hulls the museum acquired over the years. The museum later sold it to Dave Bartush of Detroit in the early 1990s in order to raise money. ♦

Hydroplane and Raceboat Museum



Hydroplane and Raceboat Museum

Karl Pearson



[Top Left] Bernie Little bought the hull in 1971 and raced it as the *Budweiser Malt Liquor* at Dallas, where it finished fourth. Two years later he sold the boat to Tom Kaufman, but kept all of the Griffon engines and equipment. Those would prove valuable to him a few years later when he began using the larger and more powerful Rolls Griffon engines in the *Miss Budweiser* in 1979. [Top Right] Kaufman put an Allison engine in the boat and renamed it *Mister Fabricator*. It ran under that name during the 1973, 1974, and 1975 seasons. [Above] The Hydroplane and Raceboat Museum acquired the hull in 1986 then sold it to Dave Bartush to raise money. The boat was put on display at the Detroit race in 1995.

What do those numbers mean?

If you've followed unlimited hydroplanes for any length of time, you've probably noticed that the names on the boats tend to change often and a name can appear on many different boats over the years. To help keep track of all this, those who care about such things have devised a cataloguing system to keep track of the hulls. Each boat has a four-digit number. The first two digits indicate the year that the boat first appeared and the last two digits indicate the number that the boat carried when it debuted. The third *Tahoe Miss*, for instance, is assigned Hull #6403. It debuted in 1964 and used the number U-3 that year.

Howie Benns is remembered.

When Dean Chenoweth retired as driver of the *Miss Budweiser* at the end of the 1973 season, team owner Bernie Little asked the commissioner of inboard racing at the American Power Boat Association who was the best limited inboard driver in the country. Howie Benns was the answer, so Little hired him to drive his boat in 1974.

Behind the wheel of the *Miss Budweiser* that season, he won the first race he entered and added two more as the year progressed. But, shortly after the year's final race, Benns broke his leg while doing some desert motorbike riding. The injury was severe enough that it caused him to lose his seat in the *Budweiser* the following season.

Instead, he piloted the *Lauterbach Special* and *Owensboro's Own* in 1975 then returned to the *Budweiser* in 1976.

It was a short stay, however. While racing in the Gold Cup on the Detroit River, his boat hit a wave and spun backwards, tossing Benns out of the cockpit in the process. If his trajectory hadn't been slowed down by the decelerator

chute he was wearing, Benns likely would have been killed, but he instead suffered another broken leg.

Except for a brief stint aboard the *Anheuser-Busch Natural Light* in 1977, that was the end of his hard-luck unlimited racing career.

Howard W. "Howie" Benns died in Ft. Myers, Florida, on March 12. He was 78 years old. ♦



Charles D. Strang had a huge impact on boat and car racing.

Unless you've been involved in the governing of the sport of boat racing or of NASCAR, there's a good chance you may have never heard of Charles Strang, but there's also an excellent chance that you've been touched in some way by his remarkable career. Charles D. Strang passed away on March 11 at the age of 96.

He was born in Brooklyn, New York, and, during the height of World War II, graduated from Polytechnic University of Brooklyn

with a degree in mechanical engineering. He joined the Army Air Corps, but spend the war doing research, first testing engines for the Wright Aeronautical Corporation in New Jersey and then at the Flight Propulsion Research Laboratory of the National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics (an organization that is now known as NASA).

After a time working as a research associate at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, where he designed the first stern-drive engine for use in a boat, he then went to work as Director of Research for Kiekhaefer Mercury Marine in 1951.

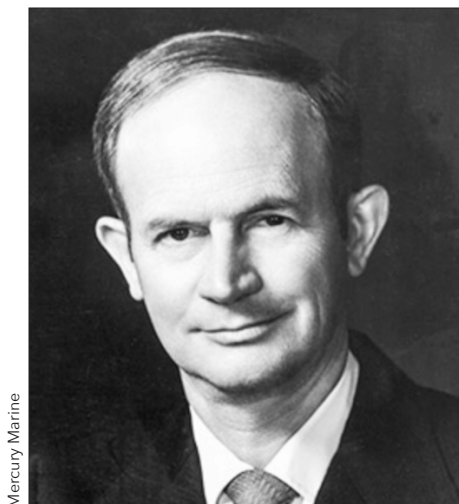
He would eventually become executive vice president of the company, then left to serve as Director of Outboard Marine Engineering for OMC. He would later become the CEO and Chairman of the Board of OMC.

Strang began competing in outboard racing events when he was young and continued his involvement in the sport as an adult. He would eventually become the president of the American Power Boat Association (APBA) and is the



Hydroplane and Raceboat Museum

The *Miss Budweiser* in 1974.



Mercury Marine

Charles C. Strang

only American to ever serve as the president of the Union Internationale Motonautique (UIM), which governs powerboat racing activities in some 50 nations.

More recently, Strang served as the national commissioner for the APBA, where he acted as the final arbiter for appeals involving the rules, the sport's Supreme Court, if you will. He once held the same position for NASCAR.

His involvement in that role was felt by unlimited hydroplanes in late 2016 when Strang issued the final judgement in a rules dispute that eventually determined that the *Miss HomeStreet* was the winner of the 2016 HAPO Columbia Cup in the Tri-Cities. ♦

2018 EVENT SCHEDULE

Spring Training at Tri-CitiesJune 1
Guntersville, AlabamaJune 22 - 24
Madison, Indiana..... July 6 - 8
Tri-Cities, WashingtonJuly 27 - 29
Seattle, Washington August 3 - 5
Detroit, MichiganAugust 24 - 26
San Diego, California.....September 14 - 16

Earl Wham passes away.

Though his career in unlimited hydroplanes was brief, Earl Wham was a legend of both limited in-board hydroplanes and car racing in Eastern Washington and Northern Idaho for more than 50 years. Wham passed away on March 2 at the age of 87.

Wham's greatest fame came behind the wheel of his 7-Liter hydro named *Miss Merion Bluegrass*, which he drove to APBA National High Point titles in 1970 and 1971 and which he drove to a mile straightaway speed record of over



159 mph in 1967.

The records that he set in hydroplanes and the success he had in circle racing and on the drag strip in race cars was largely due to his engine building skills. His engines earned folklore status among racers in the Spokane, Washington, area and carried the signature name of "Kong Power."

Wham's unlimited career came in 1969 when he was asked to drive the U-19 *Atlas Van Lines*. He sat at the controls for the first four races of the season, with his best showing being a fifth place finish at the Spirit of Detroit Trophy race. ♦



Hydroplane and Raceboat Museum

The U-19 *Atlas Van Lines* in 1969.

HydroFile

Race Team News



Lon Erickson

U-1 HomeStreet Racing

The HomeStreet/Miss Madison team has re-grouped and brought on Mike and Larry Hanson to finish the new hull that is currently under construction. In order to expedite their plans to make the hardware and systems of both boats interchangeable, the existing 2017 hull has been moved, from Madison, Indiana, to the HomeStreet Racing shop in Tukwila, Washington. Look for the 2017 hull to participate at the H1 spring testing in June, with hopes for the new hull to possibly make an appearance. As progress on the new hull continues, we will know more as June 1 approaches. We are also expecting updates to the team and crew responsibilities moving ahead in 2018.

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

Work on the rebuild of the former U-2 hull has wrapped up at Henderson Hydroplanes in Ontario and the hull has been moved to Dave Bartush's Detroit shop for paint and systems installation (below). The hull was made lighter, the sponsons were heavily modified, and the running surfaces were updated. The second hull in the Bartush fleet, the U-7, will now have cockpit work done to repair the damage suffered at last year's Gold Cup (bottom).



Jim Zaremski



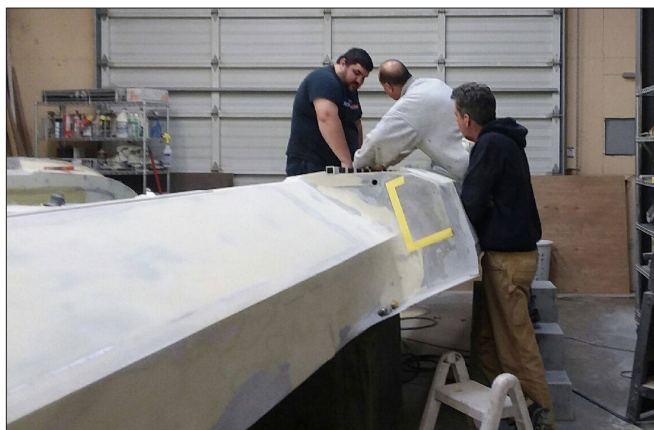
Lon Erickson

U-16 Ellstrom Racing

The focus from the Ellstrom Racing team heading into 2018 appears to be solely on the Ellstrom entry in the Turbo UTV class of the Desert Off-Road Racing Series. There have no announcements or comments pertaining to running their boat in the H1 series for 2018. The U-16 hull remains on-tilt and has been stored at the U-9 Jones shop since last season.

U-21 Go Fast Turn Left Racing

Another round of crew nights took place at the Go Fast Turn Left shop, with more work being done on the new hull for the O'Farrell's.



Go Fast Turn Left Racing Team



Go Fast Turn Left Racing Team

U-99.9 Leland Unlimited

Aaron Salmon and the crew continue making progress on repairs to the U-99.9 hull. Fabrication and strengthening of the transom area damage and a rebuild of the front spar are nearing completion. Salmon and owner Stacy Briseno have initiated sponsor negotiations for 2018 races.



Lon Erickson



Lon Erickson



Lon Erickson



Lon Erickson

440 Bucket List Racing

Updates from the BLR team show work on a new doubler behind the cockpit and new installations for the oil tank, oil cooler, and other related hardware.



Bucket List Racing



Bucket List Racing

My \$0.02 Worth

Editorial Comment



Andy
Muntz

When most people consider the 115-year history of this sport, they usually divide it into two eras: the years before World War II and the time afterward. But, let me propose that there is another way to look at our history. There was the era when the participants were there just to enjoy an exciting pastime and the era when racing became a business.

This month's issue of the *Unlimited NewsJournal* features the story of the boats that were campaigned by one of the last of that sportsman period: William Harrah. He, along with Bill Boeing and his *Miss Wahoo*, Samuel F. DuPont and his *Nitrogen*, William T. Waggoner and his *Maverick*, and Edgar Kaiser and his *Hawaii Ka'i III*, were of a time when multi-millionaires raced their fast boats against one another for the sport of it.

That was the norm for the first 60 years of unlimited-class hydroplane racing. In those days, it was

a breach of etiquette to name your raceboat after a product. Instead, you named it like you named your yacht. You used a pet name, something illustrious or clever.

That notion began to crack in the late 1940s with the *Miss Pepsi*, but there were some who still couldn't tolerate the idea. Mel Crook, the venerable writer for *Yachting Magazine*, thought the practice was distasteful and refused to call the *Miss Pepsi* by its name, instead only referring to it by its registration number. But, then came a ruling by the U.S. Tax Court in 1963 that essentially said that the cost of racing a hydroplane could be a legitimate and tax-deductible business expense.

That meant William Harrah and the others could participate for more than just having a good time. They could put the company name on their boat and claim it was there for the sake of advertising.

It's now been 55 years since that tax ruling, and the sport still struggles with the idea of being a commercial enterprise versus being a pastime for the wealthy. The biggest sponsors during this past half century—Budweiser, Bardahl, Atlas Van Lines, Pay 'n Pak, Oberto—have participated largely because the leaders of those businesses had a strong passion for the sport or a special relationship with somebody who did. They weren't necessarily involved because it made sense from an advertising perspective.

It's fair to wonder whether the sport can continue to depend on wealthy benefactors. The sport's future will certainly be much more assured if businesses can be shown that sponsoring a boat, or a race, is truly a viable and cost-effective option for reaching potential customers. ♦

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PLEASE JOIN US AT THE NEXT MEETING OF UNLIMITEDS UNANIMOUS.

2 p.m. on Sunday, April 8, 2018

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