



UNLIMITED NEWSJOURNAL

A Chronicle of Speed

Defending national champion gets a new team sponsor.

Miss Madison Racing has a new sponsor for the 2016 season, and it didn't have to look very far to find it. HomeStreet Bank, which sponsored the Evansville-based U-3 Go3Racing team a year ago, has signed on full-time as title sponsor of the Miss Madison this season, a boat that is



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owned by the citizens of Madison, Indiana.

Financial terms were not disclosed, but Charlie Grooms, team president of Miss Madison, said that the Seattle-based company wants to make a “big splash” in the sport and feels like the two-time defending national champions are the perfect partner to do that.

“We couldn’t be more excited to partner with a community bank. It’ll be unique to have a bank involved in our sport,” Grooms said. “They really like what we’re doing and we’re extremely excited to get this sponsorship started.”

Miss Madison Racing and sponsor Oberto Beef Jerky parted ways after last season, ending a 15-year run that saw the combination win six national championships, two APBA Gold Cups and 19 race

victories. Company founder Art Oberto sponsored the Miss Madison out of his own pocket last year, but the company was unwilling to continue the large investment this season.

Speculation has been rampant since the end of last season on what kind of sponsor the Miss Madison would land. In the past, the team has partnered with Holset, Valvoline, Kellogg’s, Jasper Engines & Transmissions and DeWalt Tools, among others, and Grooms was hard at work to find the next corporate partner.

In the end, that partner came to him.

“HomeStreet had spent some time in our sport last year and I think because of that limited involvement they kind of learned,

Continued on page 11.

My \$0.02 Worth

Editorial Comment



Andy
Muntz

This month's issue of the *Unlimited NewsJournal* has three stories from which a single thread can be drawn. The feature looks at the 1969 campaign from the eyes of a young crew-member on the bobtailed *Miss U.S.*, we hear about a presentation given by retired crew chief Jim Lucero to a group of devoted hydroplane fanatics, and we take a look at a time when hydroplane racing held as much interest in Seattle as the city's beloved Seahawks now enjoy. The thread that passes through all of these stories is Bill Muncey.

For many of us who grew up in the Pacific Northwest in the 1950s and '60s, we saw Muncey in much the same way as the area's kids now see Russell Wilson or Richard Sherman. He was the biggest personality in our favorite sport. We viewed him as a permanent fixture in boat racing and, following his death while driving a hydroplane in Acapulco, we had a hard time comprehending what the

sport would be like without him in it. Now, he's been gone more than 34 years, longer than the entire length of his illustrious career, yet he remains an icon of boat racing.

Why does Bill Muncey have such a strong presence, even now? As somebody who has written his biography and has therefore spent more than a little time analyzing the man, I think it's because he was a master at something no other driver has yet to duplicate and that the sport now desperately needs.

In Commissioner Steve David's message this past month, he talked about the arrogance of the inside and how the sport's core decisions must lead back to the fans and stakeholders. Bill Muncey understood this. He knew a fact that still holds true: If the sport wants to survive, it must conduct its business in a way that will attract fans, because only with fans will the sport have any appeal to sponsors and race sites.

In addition to his great ability

as a driver, Muncey had significant marketing skills and was a tireless promoter of the sport, making an average of 200 radio and television appearances and more than 100 speeches to Rotary and Kiwanis clubs each year. According to Georg N. Meyers of the *Seattle Times*, Muncey was "never at a loss for 10,000 well-chosen words, delivered with missionary zeal and the timing of a stand-up comic. He is nearly always entertaining, often inflammatory, occasionally profound."

The fact that Meyers described him as entertaining is no accident because Muncey also was a natural showman and understood one important thing about the sport: It exists solely to provide entertainment.

You've probably heard about Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. Maslow described his theory of humankind's needs by using a pyramid. The most important need,

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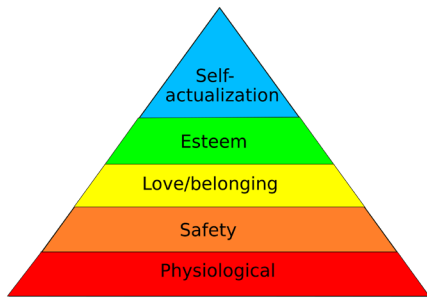
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Letters may be edited for clarity and space.



Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

physiological, is at the bottom and includes those things required for human survival: air, water and food. Next, are safety needs: personal security, financial security, and health. At the peak of the pyramid is a person's desire to accomplish. Nowhere on Maslow's pyramid will you find hydroplane racing, or NFL football, for that matter.

Muncey understood the sport's fundamental role. He once described hydroplane racing as show business in its purist form. "We have heroes and villains," he wrote in his *Powerboat Magazine* column, "life and death, success and failure, intrigue, wealth, glamor, and notoriety. The American people are drawn to the dramatic, and there is just nothing more dramatic than the sight of a roostertail, the roar of a Rolls-Royce engine and the sheer fright of an unlimited hydroplane at 150 mph!"

I don't point this out to diminish the importance of our pastime, only to give it some context. Muncey knew this, too. While he understood that the purpose of the sport was mere entertainment, he took the competition very seriously. He ultimately gave his life for it, in fact. Yet, while he was extremely competitive and greatly disappointed when he lost, he knew that his

most important job was putting on a good show for the fans. "The sin is not in losing," he once told John Hinterberger of the *Seattle Times*. "The sin is in not competing. The sin is asking thousands and thousands of people to come out and watch you do your best, and then not delivering."

But, even winning didn't guarantee happiness if Muncey's ultimate goal of providing entertainment hadn't been met. He would count his victory in the 1978 Champion Spark Plug Regatta in Miami as the most embarrassing moment of his life. In the day's first heat, his *Atlas Van Lines* was the only starter in a field of four boats. But worse, the same thing happened in the final heat when five of the six boats failed to answer the starter's gun.

"I have worked damn hard for a very long time to get the public's attention on our sport to attract new boat sponsors and race sponsors, and to inform the media that it is a superior entertainment experience," Muncey wrote in *Powerboat Magazine* afterward. "This had to be the blistering worst. That guy in the third row of the 743rd Lions-Kiwanis meeting will never believe me again."

The populace is divided into three groups when it comes to an interest in hydroplane racing: the hard-core fans (such as those reading this publication), those who have no interest in boat racing, and those who might be persuaded to watch if conditions are right. It is important to keep the first group happy, as they are the sport's ambassadors, but with his understanding of marketing, Muncey knew that most of the attention must be given to the third group,

the casual fans who can easily choose to go somewhere else to be entertained if they decide boat racing is not interesting or worth their effort

It's the casual fans that Muncey was trying to reach when he went to all those Kiwanis meetings and when he gave all those TV interviews. He also was aware that it is by far the largest of the three groups and the segment that sponsors hope to have sitting on the beach or watching on TV when they lend their name to a boat or race site.

If Bill Muncey were alive today, he would likely tell his fellow boat owners that it's the casual fans who must be drawn to the sport if it has any chance of surviving in today's marketplace. And, he might say, in order to attract the casual fan to the sport, they must remember that when it comes to operating decisions, writing new rules, and designing publicity, the sport must never let the needs and desires of the casual fan slip from its focus.

Letters

Editor:

Enjoyed your interview with Jim Hendrick in the Jan/Feb issue. I have just one correction. The picture with the caption "Jim Hendrick interviewing Lou Fageol" is actually Detroit radio personality Fred Wolf interviewing Lou Fageol.

Tim Matyn, Grosse Pointe Woods, Michigan

Editor: Thanks for taking the time to write. We greatly appreciate the correction. Our aim is to get it right, and sometimes it takes the help of readers for us to reach that goal.

Culley on the Crew: A unique look at the 1969 season.

One of the most successful crew chiefs in unlimited hydroplane history, Dave Culley spent 20 years as a crewman and crew chief for the thunderboats, most notably for the Miss Budweiser during the late 1970s and '80s. E.K. Muller, one of the founders of this publication, interviewed Culley many years ago and incorporated portions of that interview into an article that was published in the Newsjournal back in 2000. But, much of what Culley said has remained in the archives—until now. What follows uses that interview to tell the story of the Miss U.S. team's 1969 season from the perspective of a rookie crewmember: Dave Culley.

Dave Culley grew up at Arrowhead Point on the north end of Lake Washington, just outside of Seattle. “My whole little world was wrapped up in boats,” he admits. “It seemed to be more of a challenge to get a boat to ride right than a car to roll down the street on four wheels.”

Boat racing was the city's premier sport back then and, like most of the other kids growing up in the area, he watched the unlimited hydroplanes race for the Gold Cup each summer. With a knack for things mechanical, Culley's interest in race boats soon



Dave Culley



E.K. Muller

The bobtailed Miss U.S. as it appeared in 1969 with Bill Muncey at the helm.

meant that he began helping a neighbor with an outboard racer and by the time he reached 14 years old he began racing in two-place marathon boats. “I just got a big outboard and started there.”

He eventually began working at a boatyard east of Lake Washington called Hydrodrive, where he assembled and tested outdrives. If one failed, “I’d take it apart and write up a report on what failed first. It was darn’ good training for research and development.” There, he had the opportunity to meet Ted Jones, designer of the *Slo-mo-shun IV*, who was in charge of the boat division for the company. “We became

friends,” Culley said. “He was a nice guy, and when I was a kid, he was my idol.”

The U.S. Army drafted him in 1965 and his infantry unit responded to several brush fires, such as the Detroit riots. (“That’s how I got familiar with going to Detroit.”) He also moonlighted on repairs to private automobiles and became proficient with fiberglass. Upon discharge, he returned to Hydrodrive and in the summer of 1968 began working on an offshore boat, an aluminum 28-footer that was powered by an AirResearch turbine. The company wanted a big-name guy to drive the boat in

a race to Vancouver, B.C., so they turned to the biggest name in the area at the time: Bill Muncey.

Muncey was the driver of the *Miss U.S.* that summer, a team that he had joined three years before after gaining fame as the driver of the *Miss Thriftway*, one of Seattle's top boats in the late 1950s and early-60s. The team was owned by George Simon, who started racing in 1953 as one of the devoted Detroit competitors who would come to Seattle each summer with the idea of winning the race and taking the Gold Cup back to the Motor City. Though he never did that, his many boats were steady competitors in the years since and one of them even established the world's straightaway record in 1962. He hired Muncey to drive his bright-red *Miss U.S. 5* late in the 1965 season and, because he named him team manager, also did something that would have been unthinkable 10 years earlier. Simon moved his team operation to Seattle.

In 1967, Simon asked Les Staudacher to build him a new boat that incorporated several new



Bill Muncey and the team's owner, George Simon.

features, the most noticeable of which was the lack of a tail fin. Known by fans as the bobtailed *Miss U.S.*, and considered by Muncey to look kind of nasty, the boat was fast, but also had chronic handling issues and struggled to finish heats. Nevertheless, it did manage third place finishes in Seattle and San Diego in 1967 and even won the World Championship Race held in Seattle the following year, though mainly because mechanical woes had eliminated many of the other competitors.

Meanwhile that summer, Muncey also got to know Dave Culley through their work together on the offshore boat at Hydrodrive. Muncey must have been impressed because he asked Culley if he was interested in working on the crew of his race boat, which was led by Dave Seefeldt. "Bill asked me if I'd come down and look at the shop, so I did," Culley recalled.

Seefeldt was just a hard-working guy," Culley said. "He spent his

life working on U.S. then. I started there, oh, September or October of '68. For the '69 season there was a guy named Bill Church, Seefeldt, and myself—three full-time, plus Muncey. Seefeldt knew a lot of the Thriftway guys, who helped earlier. They didn't help on the boat, but they gave Seefeldt ideas."

Culley remembers that the days seemed to start and end late. "Seefeldt didn't want to get up too early, so we'd work from 9:30 or 10 to 6 every day. We'd miss the traffic. Maybe there wasn't much traffic in those days. On Tuesday and Thursday, we'd work until 10 at night, and on Saturday we'd work until 1." They would then spend Saturday afternoons doing fun things together as a crew and building comradeship. Sometimes the outings would be at Muncey's house on Mercer Island. "We water-skied, mowed his grass as a team," he said with a chuckle.

The crew's first order of business was to fix the boat's



Bill Muncey and Dave Seefeldt.

Sandy Ross Collection

E.K. Müller



handling problems. It had an alarming tendency to fall on its nose and have its rear end fly into the air. “When I got there, we started moving weight back. We moved the oil tank and the ADI [anti-detonation injection or water-alcohol] and, I think, the battery. Seefeldt was the brains behind the operation. I think we deepened the sponsons a little bit, to get more air under the nose. He was good at that. He was a good craftsman; he was good at anything.”

Soon, it was time to go for a test. “I’d only worked there about two-months, like Novemberish, and Muncey decided we should go test at Sand Point. Oh boy! We get to go test a boat! He told me to bring my lifejacket and helmet. I thought, great: I get to go for a ride. Muncey went out to see how everything was. The boat was better, supposedly, than it had ever been. It must have been real bad before ‘cause it was still bad. It was just a casual day. Sand Point was a good place to test. Not a lot of people showed up; not a bunch of people in your hair. You could test at will. Things were a little freer then.

“So the next minute he said, ‘Get in it, go out, and see what you

think. Don’t go over 135.’ Well, you know, this was a 30-foot boat with quite a bit of power. I’d never driven a limited. I jumped in it and roared off, went around a few times. I was a little awed at everything, especially the power. I did watch the speedometer. I didn’t want to go over 135 and make Bill mad. I could go into the corners—I think he said, like 110 was about as fast as I should attempt to turn the boat. So I would slow it down, and I would turn, but it took a long way to turn. Without buoys, just driving around, you can use up a lotta lake. I thought if that’s the way all the unlimiteds are, we’re in trouble. And I suppose they were, at that time.”

Culley’s made it back to the shore safely then had another new driving experience. His truck driving skills had been limited to handling a small bobtailed truck around Ballard with the offshore boat in tow. Now, it was time to get behind the wheel of something a good deal larger.

The team had two trucks: one to tow the boat and a tractor-trailer combination with a 38-foot van that carried the equipment, including five or six engines, and that provided crew quarters in front. As the team prepared to leave Sand Point after that first test, Seefeldt said, “Drive the truck back to the shop; eventually you’re going to have to drive.” He then rode along and told his young crewman what to do.

Working on the Rolls Merlin engines was another major task during the winter. “The parts that U.S. had weren’t as good as some other people had,” Culley explained. “You could still get new Merlins, and we weren’t buying Merlins. We had a combination.” They would put the accessory case, blower, and crankcase of a Dash Nine model Merlin into a Dash Seven case and use Dash Nine banks and cams. “So



to build one engine we had to take two apart.”

The 1969 season opener was scheduled in Guntersville, Alabama, in early-June, so as late spring arrived, Culley’s skills as a truck driver were once again pressed into service. “The first time I drove the boat truck I had to take the U.S. back to Detroit and get it painted, then meet the other truck and Seefeldt in Guntersville. It was a solo trip. You had to be pretty careful. It took a lot longer to get someplace. I made it in two-and-a-half days, on the old road. I didn’t get out of the truck too often! So I learned how to drive just by getting in and going.”

A highlight for Culley at Guntersville was the opportunity to meet Bill Cantrell. “He was a real nice guy right from the start. It seems there were a lot of nice people then, friendlier. The boat guys would do everything together. What helped me was they all liked Seefeldt. Through him I got to know everybody fast.”



Sandy Ross Collection

As for Guntersville itself, Culley remembers that the pits were pretty good. “Guntersville was along a causeway, and it was real hot, and no trees. Nice racecourse, as I remember. The water was pretty good as a whole. The air was still. I was having a good time; it was my first race. We mostly worked, didn’t do much else. A couple of parties I went to. For Seefeldt it was a big reunion. He knew everybody, and everybody loved him.”

Culley said he enjoyed the experience right from the start and had a great time finally being on an unlimited race team. “That year was probably Muncey’s best effort with the U.S.,” he says. “It was a pretty respectable operation for those days. We had three full-time guys, plus we’d pick up some part-time help. Before then it was only Seefeldt with summertime help, a bunch of college guys, and they never came around again. Some of them were Seefeldt’s friends, and they were the later Thriftway guys.”

While the Miss U.S. team had a promising start with third place finishes at the Dixie Cup in Guntersville and a week later at the Kentucky Governor’s Cup on the Ohio River in Owensboro, Kentucky, there was no doubt that the boat to beat that year was the *Miss Budweiser* with Bill Sterett at the controls. It won both of the opening races of the season.

“Their equipment was better and they had a better-trained crew,” Culley remembered. “Bill Sterett was no slouch. He was a tiger. But Muncey was pretty good. He might have been more cautious in those days, but he had to be. The boat



Sandy Ross Collection

The Miss U.S. crew hard at work on the boat’s engine.



Muncey accepts the World Championship Trophy in Detroit.

didn't ride as well as the *Budweiser*. *Budweiser* was a newer boat, and it rode pretty good for those days. Muncey always had a knack to turn a boat. He could keep up with 'em in a turn. The *Budweiser*'d go a little faster a little safer down the chute. There were a few other good boats, but not as outstanding as the *Budweiser*. We were about equal to everybody else, but *Budweiser* was better."

Among those other contenders were the *Notre Dame* with Leif Borgersen driving and the *Myr's Special*, with a young Dean Chenoweth at the wheel. The *Myr's Special* was introduced by Lee Schoenith and his Gale Enterprises team the year before as the *Smirnoff* and had been designed using computer technology and a wind tunnel with the hope of making it more stable on the racecourse. Among its most distinctive features was a space-age split tail and a bow that wasn't round like the others, but cut off so that the sponsons jutted forward of it on both sides, giving it the name pickle-fork.

"The Gale guys were runnin' darn' good," Culley said. "They'd taken the bat tail off. Dean Chenoweth was driving. The first year hadn't run very good, but the

second year it was starting to run pretty good."

Two weeks after Owensboro, the hydro fleet assembled on the banks of the Detroit River for the Spirit of Detroit World Championship Race. In an event that is remembered by a great many obscure rule interpretations involving race stoppages and starting clocks, as well as safety inspections, Muncey went into the final heat with 700 points earned through a first and second place finish in preliminary heats. Dean Chenoweth and the *Myr's Special* had 800 points, however, while Bill Sterett and the *Budweiser* struggled. "*Budweiser* was the faster boat, but they had some problems

and hooked it, tore some decking," Culley remembered. "Sterett didn't get hurt, but he was shaken up a bit and didn't drive the rest of the day."

The *Myr's Special* developed a sick engine during the third lap of the final that allowed Muncey to rocket into the lead and take the checkered flag, earning the team 1,100 points. Chenoweth, meanwhile, kept his boat running and managed to cross in second place, therefore gaining a tie in points. That's when rules again came into play. A recent rule change dictated that if two boats were tied in points at the end of the race the winner would be determined by their finish in the final heat and not by total elapsed time. As a result, Muncey and the *Miss U.S.* were presented with the trophy. "So through circumstances and hanging in there, we did win, and that was pretty good in George Simon's home town," Culley said.

As the season progressed to Madison, Indiana, the following week, Muncey drove the bright-red boat to a second place finish behind the surging *Myr's Special*. Consequently, with only the three West Coast races remaining in the season, *Myr's Special* was leading





Dave Speer

Bill Muncey fires up the boat's engines and heads onto Lake Washington in Seattle.

in the national points race while Muncey and the *Miss U.S.* were second.

By this time, Culley had settled into his new role as a crewmember and was glad to head home, leaving behind the physically demanding heat and humidity of the Midwest. Muncey also seemed to be enjoying the season. Many had been whispering in previous years that he could no longer drive and was all washed up, but those comments had pretty much ended. "I think

that year he had fun most of the time, except maybe when the boat took a few bad hops, or we messed up. Most of the time he enjoyed doing the best he could. That was his thing: 'Do the best you can with what you have.'"

Muncey, being as competitive as he was, was sometimes demanding of his crew, but they understood why. "Well, he had more experience than all of us," Culley said. "Sometimes he got excited, but it was reasonable. He understood that we didn't know everything there was to know and weren't as professional as some other teams he'd worked for. We always got along just fine. I liked to work with Bill."

Culley also had another opportunity to drive the hydroplane. "It wasn't much," he said. "Dave Seefeldt took his mother for a ride this one day, and I took Bill Church. That way he'd get a ride, and I'd get to drive again. But we didn't go very fast 'cause Church didn't care to go for a ride, he decided. I didn't have my helmet that day, so I was wearing Muncey's helmet. His head was obviously

larger than mine in many ways. The helmet was too big and with both of my hands on the wheel, it kept bouncing around. Church had to move the helmet around so I could see out of it. That, and the boat didn't handle real good, so he decided he didn't want to go any faster or even longer. The second ride was pretty short."

The West Coast portion of the campaign started with a victory in the first heat of the Atomic Cup in the Tri-Cities, but the *Miss U.S.* failed to finish the second heat and did not qualify for the final. Meanwhile, Chenoweth won again and built a comfortable lead in the national points race headed to Seattle with the *Miss U.S.* and the *Budweiser* tied for second. But, the *Myr's Special* had a disastrous race on Lake Washington with only one third-place finish in a preliminary heat while Bill Sterett had the *Budweiser* operating in top form. As for Muncey, he finished a respectable fourth. "Sometimes we'd run pretty good, but because of the crews inexperience and the lack of equipment, we didn't do tremendously," Culley said.

The 1969 campaign ended with the Gold Cup on Mission Bay in San Diego in late September. And, it turned out to be a *Budweiser* show. Sterett won two of the three preliminary heats while Chenoweth managed only one victory and failed to finish a heat. That meant the final result and the national title were not much of a question as the final heat started. Sure enough, with a safe second-place finish, Sterett won both.

As for the *Miss U.S.* and Bill Muncey? "At the Gold Cup in San Diego, we were looking pretty good," Culley remembered. "Race



Rich Ormbrek

Miss U.S. at the dock in the Tri-Cities.



George Simon, owner of the Miss U.S. team.

day came, and we didn't do too good. One time we didn't get a water hose hooked up properly. We had some funny disconnects. That put us out of one heat. The whole day went bad. We were not competitive whatsoever." The boat didn't make it to the final heat and the team ended the season third in the final standings.

"The Gold Cup was our last race," Culley said. "We came home and packaged up everything. Bill lost his contract, because it wasn't what you'd call a winning season."

There had been some long-standing tension between George Simon and his driver, it turned out. "Well, before I got there I guess he had quite a bit to say about how the boat ran. Muncey kept telling him, 'Ya gotta leave it up to us.' Simon finally did just that in 1969. Culley said the owner gave Muncey a set amount of money every month to run the boat. "I don't know how much he got. Seefeldt did the buying. Bill took care of the bills. He paid me."

Culley thought that 1969 was probably the most professional

year Muncey had with the Miss U.S. organization. "Of course I was new and couldn't offer a whole lot, just trying. A guy works pretty hard when he's 24. Muncey felt that Simon had lost interest in his boat. At times we ran good, but we just couldn't keep it all together."

Simon decided to move the boat back to Detroit where he could keep a tighter hand on the operation and cut expenses. Both Seefeldt and Culley were offered jobs to go back and work there. "Seefeldt went and helped them, showed them what to do," Culley said. "One of the guys that worked with us went back to a muffler shop, Bill Church. He never worked on a race boats again. I'd just got married, so I didn't want to move. Seefeldt got me a job with Bob Espland on the *Notre Dame*. He set it all up for me."

Culley would spend the next three years on the *Notre Dame* team, crewed briefly under Jim Lucero for the "Winged Wonder" *Pay 'n Pak* in 1973, became crew chief for the *Valu Mart* and *Weisfield's* boats in 1974 and '75,

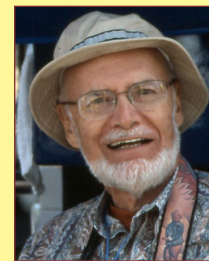
went to work for Budweiser in 1976, and became crew chief for the team two years later.

His experience on the *Miss U.S.* team in 1969 would prove to be valuable for all of that. "I learned a lot about Merlin engines, which helped in later years," he says. "Through Seefeldt; he was a pretty darn' good mechanic. I learned a little bit about the boat and how it handled. Mostly you learn about strategy from Muncey, 'cause he'd talk it over. He stressed a crew-team operation. Everything we did was for the team. He liked that, and it was fun to do."

And, he always remembered a bit of sage advice that Seefeldt once gave him as he worked on the team that year. "Seefeldt kept telling me this year is one of the last years of fun," Culley recalls. "Boat racing is getting more professional and more political. It won't be as much fun."

Remembering the Interviewer

The story of Dave Culley's experience on the crew of the *Miss U.S.* in 1969 was derived from an interview that was conducted by



E.K. Muller (1929-2004), one of the founders of Unlimiteds Unanimous, the organization that produces this

publication. Muller fell in love with this sport in the mid-1950s and had a passion for its history. He assured the accuracy and readability of this publication during its formative years. Unlimiteds Unanimous is a Seattle-based club of hydroplane fans that this year is celebrating its 50th year of existence.

HomeStreet Bank to sponsor Madison team.

Continued from page 1.

in their words, that the Northwest has a real boat racing culture and is very fervent,” Grooms said.

“Through connections of connections, they found out that we were going to be available and they reached out to us and wanted to see if we had an interest in doing some things that would really help them in their mission and it worked out well. We kind of have the same goals and objectives. It came together really pretty quickly.”

Grooms said the deal with HomeStreet Bank is for this season with options for the next three years, but he fully expects a long-term relationship. The company has already talked about incorporating driver Jimmy Shane into its marketing campaigns and wants to use the Miss Madison display boat to help open new branches.

“They are a very growing, thriving entity in the Northwest,” Grooms explained. “They are opening up a number of branches here in 2016 and we’re going to be heavily involved with our display boat at those branches. They believe that this relationship will only help to promote them in what they are doing in this area. I look for it to be a long-term thing. I can only hope that it will be 15 years like Oberto was, but I’m not looking forward to that necessarily. But a long-term relationship for sure.”

“HomeStreet Bank’s support of the Miss Madison validates everything the team has worked for and has accomplished,” said H1 Chairman Steve David, a former Miss Madison driver. “Their commitment to the team and the sport



Mark Mason (left), chairman, president and CEO of HomeStreet Bank, shows off a model of the new Miss HomeStreet Bank. Holding the other end of the model is defending national champion Jimmy Shane, the boat’s driver.

supports the belief that our sport is viable, relevant and provides a legitimate return on investment. Our job is to insure their investment in the sport provides a continuing mutual benefit for years to come.”

HomeStreet Bank was founded in 1921 and has 113 branches in the western United States as well as Hawaii. “We fully anticipate a very active display boat schedule to promote what they are doing,” Grooms said. “We also anticipate a personal services contract with Jimmy Shane to help promote their endeavors. It will be multi-faceted. We’ll see a lot of things on the beach, from T-shirts and those type of things.”

At the forefront of that marketing will be Shane, who has 11 career victories in his first four full seasons in the sport. “Jimmy has really stepped up to the challenge and has reached out to our sponsors, our fans and our citizen-owners,” Grooms said. “We’re very excited about having him a

part of that and HomeStreet is as well. Jimmy is quite popular in the Northwest and has done a number of things for Boeing, the Hydroplane Museum and the sport in general. He’s becoming quite the ambassador and we’re happy that he can promote the city, the citizens and our sponsors.”

Back in Madison, Indiana, crew chief Larry Hanson has been hard at work getting the boat ready for the 2016 season and Grooms anticipates some changes. “This is really the first year we’ve been able to let Larry Hanson put his mark on the thing,” he said.

Grooms explained that up until this point, the team has done what former crew chief Mike Hanson wanted them to do, but Grooms has told Larry that the boat is his. “Larry is kind of making it his own now and the challenges and changes that we’ve faced are ones that Larry wants to address, and he’s going to step up to the plate and I think it will be faster than it’s ever been,” Grooms said.

Awards banquet honors the best of 2015 season.

A crowd of more than 225 hydroplane fans packed the Pacific Science Center in Seattle on Saturday night, February 20, to honor the best in the sport of unlimited hydroplane racing for the 2015 season. The annual H1 Unlimited Awards Banquet recognizes not only the achievements of the drivers that fly these magnificent boats at over 200 mph, but also the outstanding sponsors, race sites, media outlets, crew members and volunteers who make this sport the fastest on the water.

“Tonight we are honoring those individuals who do so much for our sport,” said H1 Chairman Steve David. “The racing was magnificent, maybe the most competitive racing we have seen in our history, but to put on a great show, we need to honor and thank all those who made this possible.”

Jimmy Shane and the U-1 Oberto team took home top honors. Shane and the Oberto team were recognized for winning their second consecutive high-point championship while Oberto’s Larry Hanson was named Crew Chief of the Year.

“This is a big night for the Miss Madison Racing Team,” said David. “Not only are we honoring this team for their outstanding 2015 season, it is a great way to honor Art Oberto, ending a 40-plus year run of sponsoring an unlimited hydroplane on the H1 national circuit, and then have this team use this banquet to announce HomeStreet Bank officially as their national sponsor for 2016.”

The top three national high point drivers and teams were also

honored. J. Michael Kelly and the Graham Trucking team were second place honorees with Cal Phipps and the Dalton Industries team taking the third spot.

The U-27 Dalton Industries (Wiggins Racing) team also took home the honor for Crew of the Year and Milt and Charlie Wiggins were named as Team Owner of the Year.

Also receiving honors for their performance on the national circuit in 2015 was the U-100 Leland Racing team with the Chairman’s Award and its driver Kevin Eacret named H1 Unlimited Rookie of the Year.



Larry and Art Oberto were honored for their long participation in the sport.

H1 Unlimited



Miss Madison’s Charlie Grooms accepts the national championship trophy.

H1 Unlimited



The U-100 team won the Chairman’s Award. From the left, driver Kevin Eacret, also Rookie of the Year, team owner Stacy Briseno, and crew chief Ben Rice.

Chris Denslow

Heritage

Historical Perspective



Craig Fjarlie

Mania

The last few years, Seattle has experienced a collective mania for the Seahawks NFL team. People wear Seahawk shirts to their jobs, fly flags from car windows, and the local media treats Seahawk news with the same level of—and enthusiasm—as the 2016 presidential election. I must admit, there are times it becomes a little overbearing. I can't say for sure if the same level of mania exists in other cities with NFL teams, but sometimes I suspect there's a bit more of it in Seattle than elsewhere in the country.

When I grew up in Seattle (more than a few years ago), there seemed to be a need on the part of Seattle residents to remind the rest of the country that we are here. We're not some forgotten corner of the continent, content to be obscure. Boeing aircraft, Microsoft software, and Starbucks coffee all have elevated Seattle's civic profile, but that nagging, historic feeling of inferiority still maintains a grip

on Seattle's self-concept; especially among many long-term residents.

In 1950, the success of *Slo-mo-shun IV* ushered in a period of hydro mania. Finally, the city had something that gave it national recognition. Remember, this was a time when the boats raced for yacht clubs and received coverage in national boating magazines, newspapers including the *New York Times*, and occasionally on early black & white television programs. In Seattle, people identified with boats that raced for the Seattle Yacht Club or the Queen City Yacht Club. They were "our" boats and we cheered for them with the same fervor and intensity that Seahawk fans now cheer for the team that carries the city's name onto the nation's football fields.

Seattle's hydro mania was on public display every August during Seafair week, and occasionally at other events. When *Slo-mo-shun IV* crashed in Detroit before the 1956 Gold Cup, the battered remains of the boat were placed on display in the KING-TV parking lot. Crowds

came to see the boat and express their grief. (It should be noted that Stan Sayres died within a few days of the accident.) After *Miss Thriftway* crashed at Madison in 1957, the wrecked boat also was displayed in the KING-TV parking lot. It drew a crowd, but nothing close to the size of the one that came to view *Slo-mo*.

Of course, in the 1950s there were no major league sports teams in Seattle. Aside from hydroplanes, there was University of Washington football and Seattle Rainiers minor league baseball, but not much else. Things began to change in the 1960s.

The first change that affected hydroplanes was when the sport severed its ties with yacht clubs and put the location of the Gold Cup up for financial bid. For a couple of years fans still thought of boats as representing their city, or another city elsewhere in the country, but that affiliation slowly began to wane.

Next, Seattle aggressively pursued major league sports teams. First came the Supersonics NBA team. A late '60s election called "Forward Thrust" was designed to help pay for a stadium and provide the financial resources for Seattle to attract other major league teams. Bill Muncey even helped push the Forward Thrust election when he drove *Miss U.S.* near the highway 520 floating bridge with a sign mounted on the deck urging voters to support the measure. The Seattle



Slo-mo-shun IV

Pilots baseball team resulted, yet lasted only one year, but before much longer, Seattle had the Mariners and Seahawks, and a domed stadium where they played.

The Supersonics have since left town, but now Seattle's baseball and football teams have new, separate stadiums and the city has a major league soccer team, the Sounders, that shares the football stadium with the Seahawks.

Looking critically at Seattle's sports scene, I have to draw some conclusions. Again, my observations are primarily about Seattle; I can't speak with any authority about the situation in other cities. First, professional sports teams have large budgets for promotion and advertising. Those dollars are used very effectively. Second, sports reporters learn a lot about "stick and ball" sports while they are in college. Most know very little about motor sports, whether it

is auto and motorcycle racing, boat racing (including sailing, for that matter), and probably never hear about airplane racing.

The result is that reporters are more comfortable covering sports they know and understand. Spectators support teams that represent their hometown. That's also true with sports that include national identity, such as the Olympic Games.

What can hydroplane racing do to elevate its profile? First, it needs money that can be used to promote its races and teams. Right now, financial issues are a major concern. Second, take a cue from Bill Muncney. Drivers have to become public figures, not just people who race once a year and drop out of sight. Third, the boats need to have an identity, too. At least, the top boats need that affiliation. Look at Madison, Indiana. *Miss Madison* has an identity with the city and it

retains a large local fan base as a result.

I suspect the Seahawk mania in Seattle will slowly fade if the team fails to make the Super Bowl for a couple more years. The Mariners had some good seasons a decade ago, and there was added mania for the team during those years. That has since faded, although the team still has a loyal following.

There should be room for Seahawk mania, Mariners mania, Sounders mania, and hydro mania. Bill Muncney thought so when he promoted the Forward Thrust vote. Local boats and drivers need to be on public display to meet fans and make the sport more visible again. I suspect it's difficult for drivers who have regular careers and families to take time to make public appearances, but it has to come with the driving assignment. We all need to work to reinvigorate mania for hydroplanes.

Winners at the H1 Awards Banquet.

Crew of the Year: U-27 Dalton Industries (Wiggins Racing)

Owner of the Year: Milt and Charley Wiggins

H1 Official of the Year: Steve Peterson

Rookie of the Year: Kevin Eacret

Crew Chief of the Year: Larry Hanson

Race Site of the Year: Tri-Cities Water Follies & HAPO Gold Cup

Sponsor of the Year: UAW-GM Spirit of Detroit Hydrofest

H1 Outstanding Contribution: Walt Ottenad

Chairman's Award: Detroit Riverfront Events (Mark Weber, Doug Bernstein, Bruce Madej)

Chairman's Award: H1 Staff of Volunteers

Chairman's Award: U-100 Leland Unlimited

Steve Montgomery Award for Media Excellence: Jeff Morrow, Tri-Cities Herald

Steve Montgomery Award for Media Excellence: Scott Sisteck entire KOMO-TV news desk

Vic Nelawake Volunteer of the Year Award: Tommy Levitt, UAW-GM Spirit of Detroit Hydrofest

Pro-Action Photo: Chris Denslow

Pro-People Photo: James Crisp

Fan Photo: Tim Johnson

Season High Points 3rd Place

Driver: Cal Phipps

Season High Points 3rd Place

Team: U-27 Dalton Industries

Season High Points 2nd Place

Driver: J. Michael Kelly

Season High Points 2nd Place

Team: U-5 Graham Trucking

National Champion Team: U-1 Oberto

National Champion Driver:

Jimmy Shane

Around the Circuit

Race Site News



Chris Tracy

Some people are living legends in the sport of unlimited hydroplane racing. Jim Lucero is certainly part of that group. His achievements as a crew chief for teams such as Pay 'n Pak, Atlas Van Lines and Winston Eagle, resulted in him being inducted into the Hydroplane Hall of Fame in 1980.

The Royal Order of the Turbine (ROTT) club invited Lucero to share some of his unlimited hydroplane memories at its ROTT West meeting in January. In accepting the invitation, Lucero noted that he'd be happy to speak as "the sport has been very good to him."

Jim Lucero had both successful theater and parking lot businesses in Seattle, so how did this University of Washington engineering alumni get into the

hydroplane business? He admits that he was always fascinated by hydroplane racing, dating back to when he was a kid in 1955, but his dad did not share that enthusiasm.

His first hydroplane gig in 1965 was the result of luck. He visited the Notre Dame shop with a friend who interviewed for a crew job. But his friend did not get back to the Notre Dame folks. They called Lucero and asked him if he wanted to work for them, mainly cleaning parts. At first he thought he'd work days on the *Notre Dame* and attend to his parking lot business at night, but he was invited to go the circuit.

One of his first experiences was to drive the Notre Dame truck, trailer and boat to Tampa, Florida for the race. Lucero had no experience whatsoever as a truck driver and the trip to Tampa proved to be death defying! He could not always keep the truck and trailer in one lane when he went down hills and sometimes the truck was in one lane and the trailer (and boat) crossing into the other lane. Sometimes going down hills the trailer and boat pushed the truck! And it got worse in Louisiana, as a spring in the third axle broke. Without replacement parts, they continued to Tampa with the trailer sometimes swaying from one side of the road to the other. In Tampa, he learned that the new trailer had one axle placed too far forward and that resulted in not enough tongue weight. Lucero recalled a couple of near-miss accidents on that trip to Tampa.

Lucero recalled the trip from Tampa to Washington, D.C. and the deaths of three drivers at that race; one can tell that that experience still shakes him. In retrospect, he recalls that in those days the engine power was ahead of the boat aerodynamics. Boats were a handful and drivers were "brave."

Generally, he believes, the team with the best boat won races. Boat work was relegated to the off-season and the work during the season was almost fully concentrated on engines and maybe a little on props. This was primarily true as the piston engines required so much work during the race season. Early in his career, he decided that model needed to change. Quite simply, making the boat better during the season needed to be also a priority, as this could improve both performance and safety.

As Lucero's career progressed to other teams, he credits much of his racing success from getting talented help, often for free, from experts at Boeing and Lockheed who helped the programs he managed as the crew chief. The expert help was especially important in material technology and they contributed smarter construction techniques, innovation and improved aerodynamics. But he was quick to remind those attending that Dave Heerensperger was the force behind the rear wing.

Expert help, along with Lucero's careful attention to budget,



Karl Pearson



Karl Pearson

were instrumental in the winning of his teams, often with a smaller budget than teams such as Budweiser. He was quick to add that they filmed their runs, starting with Super 8mm and then video. Lucero especially liked to review 8mm film as he could go through it frame by frame.

After the deaths of his friends Bill Muncey and Dean Chenoweth in racing accidents, he sat down with Chip Hanauer and said he had to help fix safety issues or get out of the sport. Even before the enclosed cockpit, he fought with APBA over the concept of belting the driver in, as he thought most drivers that had died racing could have walked away if they were belted in. He noted that the APBA fought him on this and drivers that were belted in had to sign an APBA waiver.

Lucero is proud that he helped get the ball rolling on cockpit safety, which later moved to enclosed cockpits. He remarked that now we expect drivers to walk

away from crashes and noted that safety changes have filtered down to the other boat racing classes.

Over the years, Lucero credits Ron Jones, the Budweiser team, and the teams he worked with for improving driver safety.

So how did Lucero get interested in turbines? Dave Heerensperger pushed using turbines and sent him to turbine school in Connecticut. The advantage of turbines is that they require much less maintenance than piston engines, so teams can spend more time on the boat and less on the power plant at races. As he puts it, “the power source needed to stay in the boat” during races. Turbine power allows a competitive team to run a season with two or three engines. Lucero believes that there are turbines available for at least 10 more years, although he notes that part prices have increased recently.

Lucero gave his opinions on questions asked:

Did he work for some memorable commissioners? Lucero quickly pointed out that the commissioner job is not an easy one. “None really have had a lot of capital to work with.” He gave the impression that Bill Doner was a favorite.

Does he have a favorite memory? His teams won three President Cups and he was able to meet two presidents as a result. He met both Presidents Nixon and Ford. He especially enjoyed talking with President Ford and described him as a regular guy. Lucero noted that his team did not meet President Carter for their third President’s Cup, as Bill Muncey was a devoted Republican and declined a meeting with Democrat Carter.

Who was the best driver to work with? None of the drivers he worked with were engineering types, but many had “good seat of their pants” skill that helped them to be in sync with his boat design, including Mark Tate, Bill Muncey, Chip Hanauer and George Henley. “They could drive the boat hard, but would not hurt the boat.”

What were you thinking with the narrow lobster boat? The goal behind that boat was stability and aerodynamics. It would have taken a lot of time to work through that design and improve it. Like most owners, his owner Steve Woomer wanted to win and did not want to take the time to see this design concept through. Lucero noted that this kind of design has been successful in other classes.

Do you see a rebound in the sport? There is lots of work to be done and he is not sure of the future. It will take money to promote the sport. Lucero noted, “Motorsports are probably all in trouble.”

HydroFile

Race Team News



Lon Erickson

U-1 MADISON RACING TEAM

As the stripped down U-1 hull is waiting in the race shop (below), news comes that HomeStreet Bank will be the new title sponsor for the upcoming 2016 season, with options into 2017-18. The announcement was made the weekend of the H1 winter meetings and banquet in Seattle. Preliminary artist renderings show a light blue, white, and black color scheme. (See the front page) Work will start soon getting the hull painted to reflect the new HomeStreet sponsorship.



MCR website

U-3 Go3 RACING

As a result of the move of last years title sponsor to the U-1, Ed Cooper's Go3 Racing is looking for a new title sponsor and associate sponsors for the 2016 season. To join in sponsorship of the Big Red Turbinator in 2016, contact them through their Facebook page.



Go3 Racing Facebook page

U-11 URG MISS PETERS & MAY

Bespoke Motorsports Logistics provider, Peters & May Racing, is proud to announce that it will continue as title sponsor for Unlimited Racing Group's H1 unlimited hydroplane gbr11 for the 2016 season, extending the company's passionate support for motorsports racing. The Peters & May Racing boat gbr11 will be driven by four-time APBA national champion and multiple Hall of Fame driver Tom Thompson from Maryland. In the meantime Scott Raney and team are busy with engine rebuilds and new paint for various hull parts. In the photo below, for example, the boat's uprights are in the paint shop.



Peters & May website



U-11 Facebook page

U-18 BUCKET LIST RACING

Kelly Stocklin reports that the “U-18 will live another day! We will do our best to keep updates on our progress”. From the four photos here, you can see they are repairing the damage from the flip in the last race of 2015 at San Diego Bayfair. Many areas of the hull need attention. No word on specific plans for 2016 yet or driver status.



Bucket List Racing



Bucket List Racing



Bucket List Racing



Bucket List Racing

U-21 GO FAST, TURN LEFT RACING

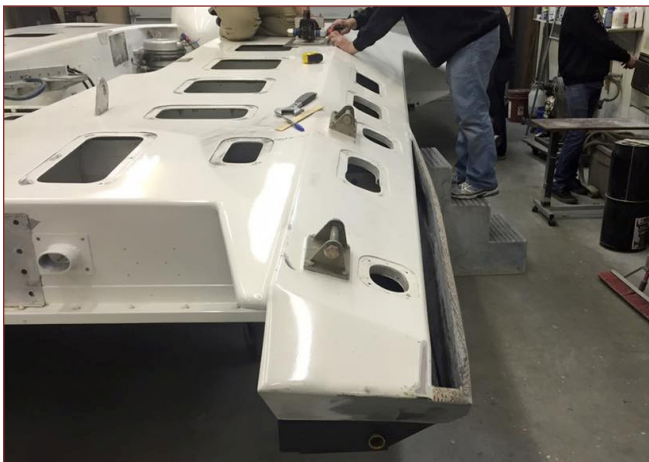
Work continues at the GFTL race shop getting the current hull stripped down, a few changes made, and ready to put back together for the upcoming season.



Brian Perkins



Brian Perkins



Brian Perkins

U-22 WEBSTER RACING

The U-22 team equipment is for sale, as noted last month in HydroFile. Steve Webster is reaching out to offshore racers about the two turbines and gearboxes available and there has been some interest in parting out the equipment. He can be reached at swebster28@verizon.net

U-27 WIGGINS RACING

The U-27 crew is busy with more updates and improvements during the winter months. Repairs to the left shoe area are underway (upper photo below) and they have the trailer stripped down awaiting new paint (lower photo below).



Wiggins Racing



Wiggins Racing

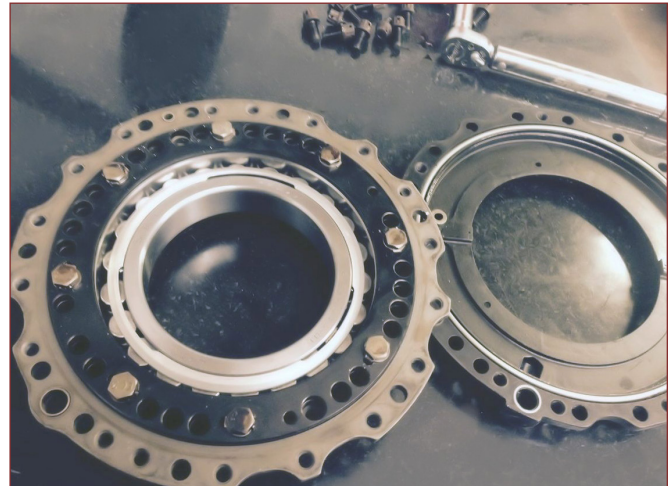
U-100 LELAND RACING

The Leland back-up hull continues to serve as the display hull promoting the Coeur d'Alene Silver Cup event that is planned for July. The boat and event

representatives were recently at the Spokane Boat Show (photo below left) talking to prospective sponsors and fans. URG owner Scott Raney is lending a hand helping with a new bearing pack (photo below) for the U-100 team going into the 2016 season.



CDA Silver Cup Facebook page



Scott Raney



**NEXT MEETING OF
UNLIMITEDS UNANIMOUS**

Saturday, March 13, 2016
Meeting starts at 2 p.m.

Kirkland Public Library
308 Kirkland Avenue
Kirkland, Washington 98033

YOU ARE WELCOME TO ATTEND!