



UNLIMITED NEWSJOURNAL

A Chronicle of Speed

The Man with the Microphone: Steve Montgomery, Part 1.

Steve Montgomery is known to most hydroplane fans as a long-time radio and television broadcaster, as well as a public relations expert who has worked on behalf of various race teams. He was born in Seattle in 1944, but soon moved with his mother to the Eastern Washington town of Selah while his father served in the army during World War II. The family lived on a small farm in Selah for several years.

In 1950, the family was visiting friends in Seattle when news broke that Slo-mo-shun IV had won the Gold Cup in Detroit. Montgomery's father had been a B-29 mechanic and was anxious to see Slo-mo, so plans were made to return to Seattle in 1951 for the Gold Cup. After seeing the '51 race, the entire family became fans of unlimited hydroplanes.

In the following interview, Montgomery recounts his involvement with the broadcast business and his affiliation with unlimited hydroplane racing.

The conversation was conducted by Craig Fjarlie.

So you went to the first race in Seattle.

I went to a lot of them in the '50s and '60s, but I don't have the kind of memory that lets me remember exactly when various things happened. I have scenes in my mind of stuff that went on early. I remember *Miss U* going by trying to qualify and not being able to get on a plane. I remember Billy Schumacher going by in his first unlimited ride, thinking, boy, that'd be pretty cool, driving one of these things.

Did you ever go to Green Lake and watch the outboards and inboards?

I did because some of my parents' friends lived about a block north of Green Lake. Denny, their son, and I were hydro fans so we would walk down the hill and watch the boats



Steve Montgomery Collection

run on Green Lake. I didn't live in Seattle, mind you, but I did a lot of that kind of stuff because we'd be over here in the summertime. I remember Bill Muncey, Chuck Lyford and a lot of their contemporaries racing on Green Lake. It was mid-50s and we were little guys. I remember watching the tethered boats also, on another part of the lake. They were the precursors to the R/C boats and went around and around on a string. We sat and

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My \$0.02 Worth

Editorial Comment



Andy
Muntz

Let's start with the start.

For each of the past 10 years or more, I've volunteered to lead groups of people on tours through the pit area when the unlimited hydros come to Seattle. I enjoy it, not only for the opportunity to hang around the boats, but mostly because it gives me a chance to talk to people about a sport that has captured my interest since I was a kid, which is a long time ago.

What's especially fun is to share my passion with people who have never seen the boats before. I get to experience the perspective of people such as the couple from New Jersey, who happened to be in Seattle because they were catching a cruise ship to Alaska the next day and thought it might be fun to see what hydroplane racing is all about. I remember one group visiting from North Carolina that had many insightful questions about how

the boats operate and I meet many locals as well who are getting their first taste of the sport.

Not long after the running of the first two heats on Saturday last summer, I was wandering in the pit area when a woman flagged me down. She must have seen that "Pit Tours" was printed on my shirt and wondered if she could ask me a question. With her were her husband and two teenaged children, all with a dazed look in their eyes. "Sure," I said. "What would you like to know?"

The woman explained that they were from out of town and had never seen a hydroplane race before. They had been watching the races that just ended and they were trying to figure out what in the world was going on out there, especially when the races started. They couldn't make any sense of it.

So, as the four family members listened carefully, I made a valiant effort at explaining what the boats are doing as they start a race. I

talked about the five- and one-minute guns, how the drivers grab lanes, the requirement that they keep an adequate speed during score-up, and what happens if a boat crosses the start line before the starting gun fires. But, even after answering several of their excellent follow-up questions, I could tell that they never quite understood.

And, that's a problem.

In last month's issue of the *Unlimited NewsJournal*, I suggested that the sport must appeal to casual fans if it hopes to survive in the current marketplace. Confusing them is not a good way to make that happen.

The process for starting a race has been changed continually in the past several years, but with flashing lights, score-up buoys and the like, the result only seems to create more confusion. Surely there's a way to start a boat race that would be easy for casual fans to understand.

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Letters may be edited for clarity and space.

Steve Montgomery (con't)

watched them for hours. Also made small balsa-wood models of our favorite boats – a lot like the ones in the big collection at the museum – and raced them up and down the carpet in the hallway.

When you were in high school, were there specific courses that you enjoyed, that inspired you?

Well, yes and no. If you'd asked me in high school what I was gonna do, I was going to be an architect. I'd taken mechanical drawing courses and did well in them. I liked drawing and perspectives and all that. My senior year in high school I was student body president of Eisenhower High School in Yakima. The vice principal called me in one day and said KIMA Radio, which was the only rock station in town, had a thing called student report. "We need to send a student out to tell 'em what we're doing, so that's you. You go do it." So I did. Did a few of those on Monday nights. Then one night I did my report and the phone rang in the control

room. The DJ says, "My boss wants to talk to you." I thought, "Oh, God, what did I do?" (Laughter.) So, on the phone he says, "Hey Steve, do you have some radio experience?" I said, "No." He said, "Would you like some?" I said, "Sure." He said, "Well, come and see me." So I did. That Saturday morning I became the weekend early morning guy. My senior year in high school and I was on the radio. Very exciting stuff.

So this kind of dropped in your lap, so to speak.

Yes it did.

It wasn't what you had planned.

Some people could sing and some could play an instrument. I could chat. (Laughter.) I always had the ability to read. People don't understand that a lot of announcing is reading, being able to read copy. I've worked with a lot of guys over the years who had really good voices and people said, "You should be on the radio." They didn't have

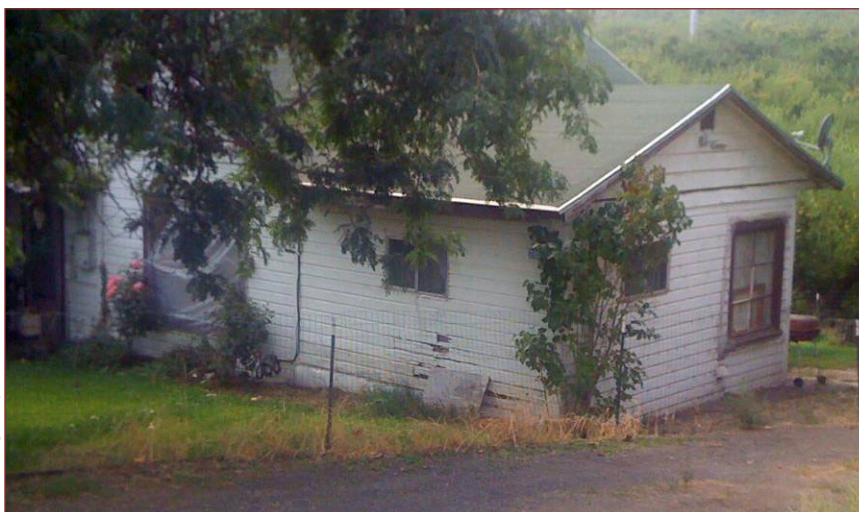


Steve Montgomery on the set of the "Community Express Show," which he hosted on public television about 1978. The show was produced from the studios of KWSU-TV in Pullman.

that ability to relate copy to spoken word. So that got me into radio and I worked for that company through junior college in Yakima and summers while I finished at WSU.

OK.

I graduated from Washington State '66. There were a couple of years I didn't follow the sport very closely. I was the only kid in Yakima that was a hydro fan. I had occasion to get over for the Seattle races, though, 'cause the station where I worked was a friend of KING-TV and we loaned them some gear. I'm working there and one of the guys came in and said, "You want to go to the Seafair race?" And I said, "Sure, why?" He said, "KING-TV needs to borrow some gear from us." So I loaded it in the passenger seat of my '59 MGA and drove to Seattle. That was the first year I ever had a pit pass. That would've been about '64. I don't remember much about that race except my buddy, Dennis, was very excited we



The house where Steve Montgomery grew up in Selah, Washington.

had pit passes. People kept trying to throw us out of the pits. Back then there were not so many people in the pits. You had to be somebody. They couldn't figure out who these two kids were wandering around in the pits.

If we can back up a bit, when you were in college, what was your major?

I was in the communications department at WSU. [Washington State University - Ed.]

And you got your degree in...

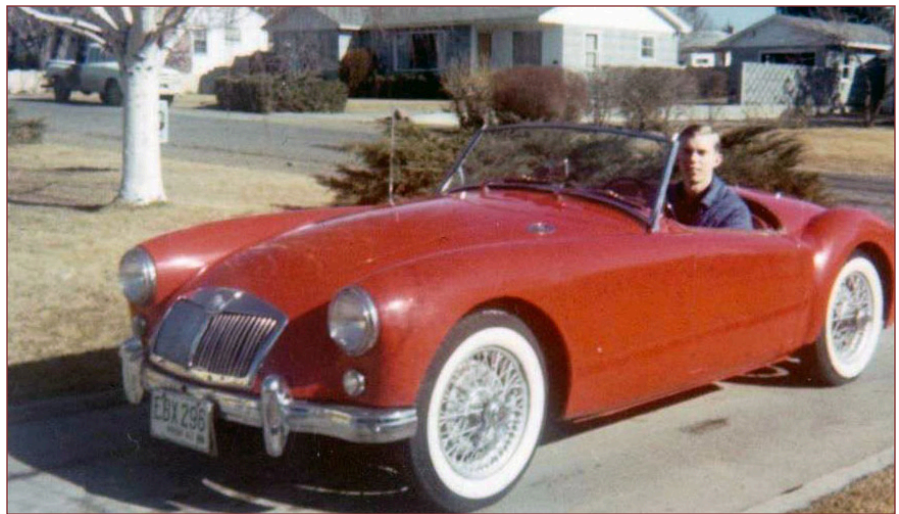
The degree says communications.

OK.

And it was interesting if you followed Washington State. I have friends just two years ahead of me and their degree says "speech."

Oh.

Radio was in the speech department and they broke it off into commu-



Steve Montgomery Facebook

Montgomery and his cherished 1959 MGA.

nications. And now it's even more specific. My degree just says Bachelor of Arts in Communications.

It has diversified so much they almost had to.

Yeah. While I was in school, my senior year, I met the manager of KREM-TV in Spokane. He was in town for a job thing. I got to the end of my senior year. I had a job called operations chief where you run the radio stations at WSU. [on

the campus - Ed.] I hadn't thought about what to do after graduation. So, this guy called me and he said, "Do you have a job lined up?" I said, "No." He said, "Well, I need a booth announcer, why don't you come up and do that." I said, "Sure, it's a deal." Then he called me back. They were owned by KING-TV. He said, "Well, they're not gonna let me hire a guy from Pullman. They want it to be somebody from the Ivy League." And I said, "For a booth announcer?" He said, "Yeah. Stand by, I'll get back to you." So he called me a week later and said, "They couldn't find anybody from the Ivy League that could announce, so you're on. Get up here." My first job after college. TV was all live back then. I sat in a little booth and watched television. Every half hour I opened the mic and said, "TV 2, Spokane." Closed the mic.

And that was it?

Yeah, but the Diamond Cup was on our station. I got pretty excited. Holy cow, I'm gonna be announcer at the Diamond Cup. But I was in a union shop and I didn't get to work the race because of my union



Washington State University

Montgomery was inducted into Washington State University's Edward R. Murrow Hall of Achievement in 2011. Pictured with him are, at far left, Dr. Lawrence Pintak, founding dean of the Edward R. Murrow School of Communications, and fellow inductees Tracy Barry, to Montgomery's right, and Shirley Skidmore, to his left.

seniority. I was brand new. They found out I knew about the hydros and the other booth announcers that were going to work the race didn't know anything about them. So they had me work with them and explain to them about the sport. I didn't get a pit pass. I sat home and watched the race. I always hoped those guys saw me years later on ESPN.

Oh!

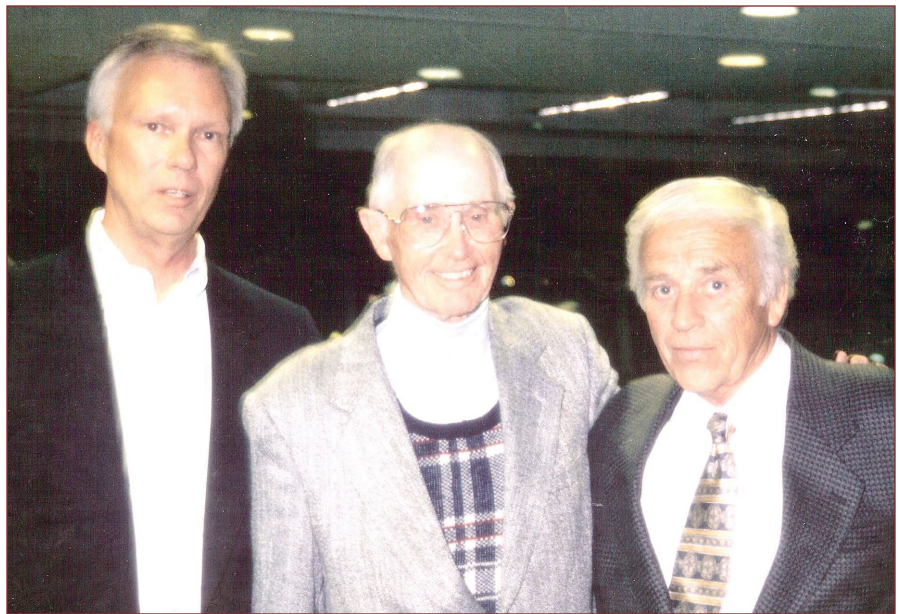
That's when I became disenfranchised with KREM-TV and unions. I went back to Yakima in television sales for a few years. In 1967, one of my clients was the Coca-Cola bottler. He and I built a dance hall, brought all the Northwest rock 'n' roll bands in. Worked with Pat O'Day on that stuff. Then, in '68, Pat hired me to move to Seattle to put on the Teen Fair, which was the 1969 Teen Spectacular. So that's how I got to Seattle. And I messed around in the concert and music business for a couple of years.

So you moved to Seattle.

Yeah. It's kind of a convoluted story but I wanted to get back into broadcasting. Get back into radio. I went into sales at KFKF in Bellevue, for Kemper Freeman. Eventually, he took me out of the sales department and made me program director.

Wasn't Bill O'Mara...

Yes! My sports director was Bill O'Mara. My dad thought I had really arrived when Bill O'Mara worked for me! (Laughter.) In '71, when Billy Sterett nosed in *Notre Dame*, O'Mara knew I was a hydro fan because he and I talked hydros



Steve Montgomery Collection

Montgomery with two veteran hydro broadcasters, Bill O'Mara (center) and Pat O'Day.

all the time. He says, "You want to go with me to the Seafair race?" I said, "Sure." So I went and sat beside him on the barge and kept some stats. Didn't say a word, just sat beside him, but I thought, "Wow, this is pretty cool." That was the first time I was ever more than a spectator or a kid with a pit pass. Years later, I was proud to nominate and induct Bill into the Hydro Hall of Fame.

Then in '74, I had gone to KIRO Radio with another brief stop in between. I was program director. We had changed the format from music to news. Started "News Radio". General manager of the station came in and said, "sales department wants us to do the Seafair race." I said, "Good idea." So I went to Pete Gross, he was my sports director. I hadn't hired Wayne Cody yet. I went to Pete and I said, "We're gonna do the boat race." Pete said, "I'm not." (Laughter.) "What do you mean you're not?" He said, "I do football and basketball, I don't do boat racing." I went to the general manager

and I said, "Pete doesn't want to do the Seafair race." He said, "Do you know somebody that could?" I said, "Well, I could give it a shot."

That was the Sand Point race.

Yeah. I went out and set up at Sand Point and did my imitation of a hydro announcer. Pat O'Day was just down the line from me. I remember the *U-95* sank.

Yup.

And Tommy D'Eath's boat caught fire. The interesting thing that happened was Ken Maurer [co-founder of the Tri-Cities race - Ed.] sat right behind me. They had this big tower and I was kind of in the front row. And right here (gestures) were Ken and his wife lookin' over my shoulder. So I got to know him a little bit. In 1975 we were going to do the race again and I was the anchor now. That had been decided. I went over to Tri-Cities to kind of see what was going on with the hydros and do some reports

back to KIRO. I was out by the start-finish tower and Ken (Maurer) walked up to me and said, "What's your job here this weekend?" I said, "Not much. Just watching and sending some reports." He said, "Well, we built a p.a. system all up and down the beach, but I don't really have anybody to talk on it. Would you be interested?" "Sure." So that was my first day of a 15-year job as p.a. announcer at the Tri-Cities race. That was a pretty big step in my hydro career. And along the way I had gotten to know Jim Hendrick. At KIRO, we were carrying his radio network at the time.

Maybe Phil Cole, too?

Not as much, but yes.

He left about the time you started there.

Phil [Executive Secretary of the Unlimited Racing Commission from 1967 to 1971 - Ed.] and I never got along very well. Going back to 1971, Sterett nosed the boat in. They took him to the hospital. O'Mara says to me, "Call Harborview, see if he's OK." I called the Harborview Center. I said, "I'm calling for Bill O'Mara at KFKF, we want to know the condition of the driver." They said, "He bumped his nose, he'll be OK." I went back and told Bill. Phil Cole came up (makes a gruff voice), "Who called the hospital?" And I said, "I did." He said, "You ever do that again you'll never cover another race." O'Mara said, "Hey, I told him." And he (Cole) says, "Mmm hmm." That was my first introduction to Phil Cole. (Laughter.) It went downhill from there. He was kind of gruff.



Steve Montgomery Collection

An elite league of hydroplane broadcasters. From the left, Mark Allen, Steve Montgomery, Art Eckman, and Jim Hendrick.

He could be. He liked to pick on people.

So that was my introduction. We were carrying Jim's (Hendrick) radio network so I knew him. I did a lot of races where I worked with Jim. On the Seattle and Tri-Cities races he would have me come along, be the second guy. Then Jim got involved with television, Diamond P Sports, and got me involved. Back then I was the number-three guy. Did the pit interviews. That's how I started doing that. So, Jim played a pretty key part in getting me started. He's still a good friend. He was kind of a subdivision of Bernie. All the people who thought Bernie had too much control thought Jim was too much of a Budweiser guy. They were paying his salary, you know. But as good a friend as you could have. Just a sweet guy.

If you were his friend, he stood with you.

Absolutely. He has a lot of friends to this day. His generation of friends is kind of a step older than mine. But, you know, one of the things I thought was pretty neat,

when I was a kid, naturally, that the Detroit people were the bad guys. During that period I got to know Lee Schoenith, and Shirley, Buddy Byers and George Simon, people like that. And wow, these are pretty good people. So it changed my perspective a lot. I'm glad I got in it early enough to get to know these people, 'cause that was pretty fun for me.

Yeah.

Eventually I got to emcee the awards banquet for Seafair a couple times. They used to have one Sunday night after the race. Well, that was a pretty big deal to me, to be doing that back in the day. I call that the start, 1974. So that's 40 years.

For a while you worked at KISW.

I did, in sales.

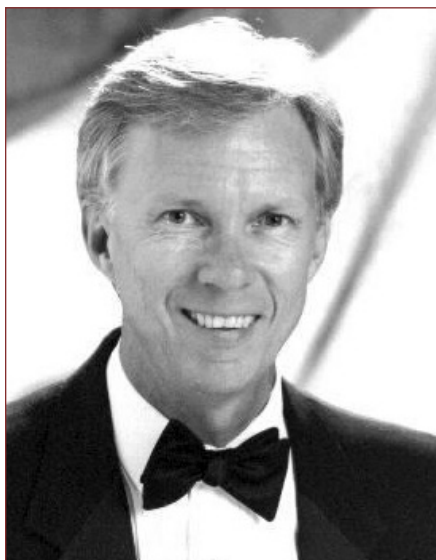
OK.

See, I eventually went back. The sales side of broadcasting is where all the money is. So it was KFKF and then KIRO-AM, the big job, then out of a job, did a lot of

production and announcing, freelance, and then to Country KAYO, in sales. We had Jim's network, so we were still in touch. Then I went to KISW in sales, because it was a better sales job. I was a sales manager at KAYO, went to be a salesman at KISW, eventually promoted to management and I was there from '78 or '79 to '88 or '89; 10 years. And it was the hey-day of KISW.

That was the big station then.

We were huge. We had a lot of fun. Made a lot of money in the '80s. I became sales manager after an ownership change. Had no fun with the new owners. And then, in '87, Don Poier asked me to join his team. We did a race in Steubenville, Ohio. It was limited. I flew out Friday night and got there in the middle of the night. Got up and remember falling asleep under a metal trailer in the pit area. Sunday night, flew home, got home in the middle of the night. Got up in the morning, went to a sales meeting for KISW and decided I had to decide which I wanted to



The young emcee of the Miss Washington Universe Pageant in the mid-1980s.

Steve Montgomery Collection

do. I decided to be self-employed so I'd have the freedom to do that stuff. Started my company in '88 or '89. It's an advertising agency. We do commercials for a number of clients and place their media. (At this time, Montgomery displays a business card.) And that's what I've been doing since then, and a lot of hydro stuff. Somebody asked me at the [2015] banquet, "How many races have you announced?" I said, "I have no idea. I would have to stop and figure it out." In the '90s there were quite a few years where we did nine, 10, 11 races.

They had way more domestic races than they have now.

On ESPN and Speed Channel. I probably did over 50 to 75 of those network television shows. A lot of them, well almost all of them, involved a trip to Tampa, Florida, to do the voice-over part of it and finish the show. That's the reason, to this day, I don't like to go to the airport. It was just brutal, the travel. Ten or 11 trips to races, and then back to Seattle, and then a trip to Tampa, and then back to Seattle.

To finish the broadcast.

Yeah. So then we'd go into a booth and do the play-by-play of the racing.

Did Jim Hendrick work with you on that?

Yeah. There was a period where Dick Crippen and Jim Hendrick were the lead guys and I was the third guy, so I probably didn't have to go to Tampa for those. My part was done at the race. Then it got to where it was Jim and I was the



Steve Montgomery Collection

second guy, so I did go to Tampa. Then there were years where I was the anchor and I had a second guy. That was Mark Evans, Scott Pierce, Tommy D'Eath, someone like that, so I did all those jobs, basically.

When they brought in ESPN or some of the others, did you have any role in helping bring that together?

No, early on Don Jones played a role in that. But after that, my first contact, Diamond P was doing the production. They were a company who had made their name in drag racing, actually. Bill Imboden was the producer.

Yeah, we remember that name.

He was actually the one. Today, the last however many years, our television deals have been made by Mike McCown. His company produces the shows and he makes the deals with the network. He has the contacts with ESPN, Speed Channel, and all those people. He set us up. Our last deal was with the CBS Sports Network and that was Mike who put that together.



Montgomery interviews Joe Little, owner of the *Miss Budweiser*, and driver Dave Villwock while at the San Diego race.

Since the days of Don Jones it has never been someone from the sport who set up the TV deal. It has been a production company who came and said, “Work with us, we’ll shoot the shows, add some sponsors.” The original shows on ESPN were done on what’s called a barter basis, where the sport arranged for the production of the show and delivered it to ESPN and didn’t pay the network anything. We split the commercials with ‘em. They sold half and we sold half. You can’t do that any more. There’s enough demand that all the networks need to get paid.

That changed in the early ‘80s, or something?

More like the 90’s. We were on ESPN. We switched to ESPN-2 for that reason. They were new and they were still taking barter deals. Then we left and went to Speed Channel because they were new and were still taking barter deals. Then we were on the Outdoor Network and Fox Sports, always because of the financial side of it,

actually. And CBS Sports Network, at the time, was the least expensive place we could go that year. That’s interesting, talking about putting the voices into the actual racing. The year we did CBS Sports, I did those voice tracks in my home office studio, which you can do now.

You didn’t have to go to the airport.

Yeah. They finished the shows and sent me a link to a video. I put it up on one computer screen and voiced onto another one, sent them MP3s. So the whole world watched boat racing announced from Kent, Washington, in our upstairs office. It changed, I mean, the whole digital recording thing. It used to be whenever I did a radio commercial it meant a trip downtown to a studio, and now it never does.

We were driving home from the Tri-Cities race, shortly after we got married, in the early 2000s some time. My phone rang and it was a lady from NBC in New York. She said, “We have a show called *The*

Great Outdoors, sponsored by Jeep,” or something like that. They had been to Detroit and taped some of the Gold Cup and they were going to put that on their show. She said, “We need somebody to announce the racing part.” So they sent me a DVD and I did the same thing. It was the first time I’d done anything like that. I thought, “That’s pretty crazy that you can do a show on NBC without leaving home.” So we sat there on Saturday and watched *Jeep’s Outdoor World* and they said, “The boats are on the water, here’s Steve Montgomery” and there I was. I looked at Debbie [Montgomery’s wife – Ed.] and I thought, “People in South Dakota are watching this with no idea what was involved.”

It’s all so different than how it used to be.

Yeah, exactly, but it’s better. I mean, it’s so great. You go to a studio downtown, \$150 an hour. You’d better do it in a take or two. Now I can sit and fiddle with it all I want and get it to where I like the sound.

Until you’re happy with it.

I get up, my voice is nice and clear in the morning. So I go upstairs and do whatever recording I have to do. In fact I do a daily radio show every morning that plays on the Internet in the afternoon. I’m Craig Stevens at Puregoldoldies.com. Food allergies and things tend to affect the voice as the day goes by.

Really?

We’ve gotten through the races pretty well. You have to take anti-histamines and things and

drink a lot of water. It gets a little better.

Well, if we can digress from all that. You went to a lot of races and saw some interesting things that happened. Maybe we can see what memories you have of some of the races and then talk more about some of the people you worked with.

Sure.

Did you go to Acapulco?

No, I did not. I was not there. I heard about it shortly after it happened.

Do you have memories of some of Chip Hanauer's wins?

I'll tell you, one I remember pretty well is when Chip won a Gold Cup for Fred Leland.

Yes, in 1999.

Yeah, I did the play-by-play on that one. I can remember expecting

Villwock to catch him. On the third or fourth lap I realized that wasn't going to happen. I said out loud, "Villwock is not catching Chip." I remember that one pretty well.

Any other memories of Hanauer's racing?

Of course, many memories starting with the first time I interviewed him in Seattle his first season. I remember Chip getting hurt in Detroit when the door opened on the bottom of the boat and they had to put Mike Hanson in it. They spent a couple hours carving on the foam in the seat to get it from Chip's size to Mike's.

He's a little broader.

I remember that. You know, one of the big impressions you always have of Detroit is the first time you go there and you watch a boat come down the backstretch in front of the yacht club. And you're, "My God, how is this gonna work?" They hang it on the skid fin, (gestures), holy cow! You try to

imagine. I was never there back in the piston era. I don't know that I ever saw a piston boat other than the U-3 run on that course. That must've been something. Those guys used to power slide, you know?

Were you there when Cooper won the Gold Cup?

Yeah.

Do you have thoughts, how close that was, the emotions of the day.

Mark Evans had been my co-host the previous year, I think, and he got hurt in that race. That's the race where he blew over and got hurt pretty bad. And then Mitch won the race.

Yeah.

That's what I remember. I remember talking to Mitch right after the race and he was concerned about Mark. What year was it?

2003.

Yeah. I saw the boats coming up the backstretch and suddenly Mark wasn't there. I didn't see him go over. We were looking for him. I could see in the yacht club, the boat was kind of puttering around. I went, "What the hell is that?" The corral was right up above me and they were saying, "Mark went over. Mark went over, but he's right side up. He's OK." Turned out he was beat up pretty bad.

Yeah, broken leg and back.

They brought him in on a stretcher. I went down to see him and his



Steve Montgomery Collection

Montgomery with his wife, Debbie, the producer and scorekeeper.

foot was pointed the wrong way. Backwards. That's what I remember about that one. I don't know how many times I've been to Detroit altogether, but I enjoy the city and the race. In 2013 and '14, we were at Debbie's son's house in Appleton, Wisconsin, and I was doing the H1 website and the Facebook page. I did it from his office in the basement of his house. I didn't go to the race those years, but we went back in 2015 and I did the live streaming with Steve David.

Maybe we can talk about some of the other courses.

Sure.

What were your thoughts about Madison, the first time you saw that?

Pretty neat. Debbie likes antiques. I told her, "You gotta see this town." I said, "Madison doesn't have antiques, it is an antique." I don't even remember which race was my first. I did some of those with the Diamond P crew. Did a lot of 'em during the Hydro Prop era. The production company out of Atlanta did those and I can remember being with those guys in Madison a few times. But, I'll tell you, the impressive thing about that was the proximity to the boats. I'd never really been down on the dock when the boats were running. They brought a speed gun and they wanted me to go down and stand on the dock and hold it while the boats came by. And Mark Tate came by in the *Winston Eagle*. I remember holding the gun up and here he came. I went, "Holy cow that's fast!" When you're close to those things, you know, it's a lot more impressive

than when you're in Seattle and they're out in the middle of a big lake somewhere. That was early '90s? I probably started going to Madison a couple of years before that. I wasn't there when Steve Reynolds got hurt. In fact, the reason I worked with Don Poier was that Steve Reynolds had been doing that season with Don and I replaced him when he got hurt in '87.

Yeah.

Steve got hurt, then Don called me and I took Steve's place on the Don Poier shows. Don had a contract with APBA to do all the limited racing, a whole series of them. Don was great and a great person to work with. We did a bunch of races: Dayton, Ohio; Decatur, Illinois; Steubenville, Ohio; Miami Marine Stadium; places like that. Ken Muscatel was one of the hot 5-litre guys at the time. Met him in Miami. He had a neat team, a really high quality little race team. I had seen him run a little bit in the Northwest. So that was one of the few times I was in Miami Marine Stadium.

Did Steve David happen to run there?

It could be...

Maybe that was after he was into the unlimiteds more.

I don't recall him. I remember Tommy Burluson, the former Sonic. Had an old beat-up 7-litre he was driving with his knees sticking up out of the cockpit. Muscatel raced for the championship against a guy named Grayson Jones, who had a

Karelsen, out of the box. Hadn't been touched. It was like an Indy car. Muscatel was all over the water fightin' the boat. This guy is just 'pshew' (gestures with hand, straight line). So Ken finished second, I remember that. I remember a bunch of flatbottoms crashing in turn one.

Did you ever see an unlimited race at Miami?

No, never did. Followed 'em on Hendrick's radio. I have some memories of that.

What do you remember about Evansville?

It [the weather] was brutal. You're in a cement bowl. In the early days, Diamond P had one of those big, 40-foot production trucks and it was air conditioned. So I would sit in there. My job was the pit interviews. I would sit in there and watch the race, then run out and get the driver, and then run back in.

And cool off.

Yeah, but the crazy thing was you'd sit there like you're in a sauna, just dyin'. Then you'd go back to the hotel and they said the high today was 82. It felt like 182! Then came 2004, Hydro-Prop. I had booked a room for that race. Debbie had never been to that race. So I told Hydro-Prop, instead of staying at the cheap hotel where you're gonna go, I want to stay at the big casino right there so we can have a room next to the race course. And they said OK. And then the race got cancelled. What did they call it, wildcat? It was during the whole blow-up with Hydro-Prop.



Lon Erickson

When it was coming apart.

Yeah, so we ended up not going to Evansville. That was 2004. I was there in '03, '02, '01, and most of the '90s. Enjoyed it, great racecourse. Viewing was good. Pit area was kinda goofy because it was a slope. You're always trying to go up or down a hill. There was a good little community there that supported the sport.

Do you think there's any chance the race could come back there?

There's always a chance, but that town has political problems. If you do a small-town race, you really have to have the government of the town supporting it like they do in Tri-Cities or Madison. Evansville hasn't had that lately. I don't know. It's expensive. They need \$170,000 for H1 and they need another hundred grand for setting up the racecourse and the cranes and everything. Here's a little-known fact: Remind me to tell you why I thought of this. In 1975 Buddy

Byers was running the URC. He told Seafair that the hydros were not coming to Seattle. We were all pretty shocked. The reason was, Seafair was broke. It was run by a guy named Arden Aegerter.

Yes.

He didn't have the \$75,000 that it cost back then to have the unlimiteds race. I was at KIRO. So I went up to Lloyd Cooney's office. Remember him?

Mm hmm.

I said, "We could be heroes by saving this race." He said, "How would we do that?" And I said, "Let me have the radio and TV stations all day Saturday. We'll do a telethon like we do for Children's Hospital and raise the money." So we did. We sold stickers for your window. You got a green one at a certain level and a red one at another level. Those were on cars. We raised exactly \$75,000 and we saved Seafair. I don't think there are 10

people around who remember that whole thing. That was a pretty neat thing for me, a lot of fun because I was able to work with all the race teams. I'd only known 'em for about a year. We were successful. So in '75 the race went back down to the other course.

Sayres pits, yeah.

I hired Wayne Cody. Now we're back to the other history. Wayne says, "I don't know hydroplanes." And I said, "Wayne, you can do anything." So I had him sit at the start-finish line and I got on top of a trailer in the pit area. I called the south turn as they headed down there, then hopped off the trailer, went down and got the winning driver. That's how Wayne Cody and I did the race in '75. In '76, I had left KIRO and I was a pit reporter for KING-TV. In '77, Jerry Bangs was killed. He was one of my best friends in the sport, so I remember that.

Must've been a hard day for you.

Very hard. My only job that day was to help Jim on the radio network. I got through that OK. We did the final. We went on and raced that day. Did the final heat on the network. I was in worse shape the day after. I was kinda in shock, or something. He was driving *The Squire Shop* that Bob Steil sponsored, owned by Jerry Kalen.

Yeah.

Jerry (Bangs) wore a lot of gear, space helmet and a big neck brace and everything. He was sitting in the pit area next to the boat. I went and sat beside him. Couldn't really

talk to him. And they said, “OK,” and he hit me on the knee like that (slaps his knee) and went and got in the boat. That was the last time I ever saw him. Next thing I knew the boat was circling out there and Anna, his wife, and I ran to this big area where the helicopter could land. It went right over us to the hospital. So I called the hospital. I said, “What do you know about Jerry Bangs?” They said, “We pronounced him dead.” I was stunned. That was just unreal.

Yeah.

My other best friend at the time in the sport was Billy Schumacher. And Billy kinda retired after that season. So I had a tough time the following year with my two closest guys gone. Big change.

That’s when Muncey was winning with the Blue Blaster.

I was doing the p.a. in the Tri-Cities, helping Hendrick when he came to town. That’s probably what I was doing at the time. That used to be so exciting, that time of year. Load my kids in the car and go to Tri-Cities. It was a big deal. We had a lot of fun.

You wanted me to remind you, what caused you to think of the phone-athon you did to save Seafair?

Oh, because we were talking about money. In 1975 it took the same amount of money to bring the hydros in that it took to buy a really nice three-bedroom rambler in Bellevue: \$75,000. And now, 40 years later, you couldn’t buy much of a house for what the hydros ask

to come to town. So when you talk about the economics of the sport, that’s what has happened, you know? By scale, the hydros should be getting half-a-million dollars or more compared to the way costs have increased for everything. There was prize money back then. It wasn’t everybody gets paid the same.

Yeah.

But it hasn’t gone up much. It’s not the fault of the race sites, they just don’t have any way to increase their income, you know? The economics of the deal are tough, definitely. I think that’s why I was thinking about that, the relationship of the dollars.

There’s one more race site we’d like to ask about and that’s Honolulu, the races on Pearl Harbor. A lot of people really enjoyed going there, but it never seemed to catch on that much with the local community.

It did OK. It was a situation where it wasn’t about catching on. It was a military operation. It was run by a division called MWR: Morale, Welfare, and Recreation, which was kind of like the old USO. They looked for things to do, good activities for their people. I was in Don Jones’ office for some reason. I used to stop and see him once-in-a-while. He says to me, “We’re going to have a race in Hawaii.” And I said, “Really? How’s that gonna work?” He told me, and I said, “Do they have an announcer?” He said, “Well, let’s see,” and he dialed a number on his phone. It was Frank DeSilva, who ended up becoming a great friend of mine. He said,

“Frank, do you have anybody that can announce this race we’re gonna do?” Frank said, “No.” Don said, “Do you want me to bring a guy?” Frank said, “Yeah, please do.” Don said, “You’re going to Hawaii.” So for 10 years I was the p.a. announcer for that race. It wasn’t 10 years, we did 10 races in nine years. The first year we did two. But I told Debbie she missed out on some great times. Once every year, a trip to Hawaii. Lot of good memories there, made some really good friends.

It was always late in the year so the weather was turning up here and it was still nice over there.

I remember, it was probably a Monday morning. There was a little restaurant on Pearl Harbor. Wasn’t a military restaurant but a lot of the guys went there. I was sitting there in my shorts and tank top with Frank DeSilva and Larry Warnken, Frank’s boss at MWR. It’s 83 degrees and there’s a breeze off the bay. Somebody walked by and said, “Are you going to Seattle?” And I said, “Yeah, later today.” He said, “It’s snowing.” (Laughter.) I said, “Oh, boy.” But, I have a lot of great memories and some pretty good stories not related to the racing itself. Made really good friends over there.

This is the end of part one of the interview with Steve Montgomery. Be sure to read parts two and three in the May and June issues, when he remembers various commissioners, tells a great story about Fred Leland, talks about his current relationship with Erick Ellstrom, and discusses the state of the sport today.

TECHNICAL TALK: How does a turbine engine work?

From time to time, we will visit some areas of technology on the pages of the Unlimited NewsJournal. That's because a big part of enjoying this sport is appreciating the sophisticated equipment that makes these machines work. Today, we'll take a closer look at the engines that are used in most of the unlimited hydroplanes.

The Lycoming T-55, L-7 turbine engine has been the standard powerplant for unlimited hydroplanes for the past 30 years. When the idea of turbines was first introduced to unlimiteds in the 1970s, they were met with a great deal of curiosity and some reluctance.

Race teams had a great deal of money and equipment invested in the engines that were used at the time: primarily the Rolls-Royce Merlin and the Allison, both V-12 internal-combustion engines that were designed in the late 1930s and used in World War II fighter planes. Fans loved the loud roar that those old engines produced, but they also were prone to frequent mechanical breakdowns and replacement parts were getting hard to find.

There had been a couple of attempts at using turbines. Jim Herrington built a turbine-powered boat named *Miss Lapeer* in 1971 and Seattle businessman Jim Clapp introduced a turbine-powered boat named *U-95* in 1973, but the idea really didn't catch on until Dave Heerensperger, one of the most successful owners in the sport, built a turbine-powered *Pay 'n Pak* in 1980.

Although the boat famously performed two complete summer-saults in its debut that year, it eventually became a steady performer and was the first turbine-powered



Chris Denslow

hydroplane to win a race: the 1982 Thunder in the Park event near Syracuse, New York.

When he built the *Pay 'n Pak*, Jim Lucero chose to power the boat with the Lycoming T-55, instead of the much smaller Lycoming T-53s that had been used in the *U-95*. At about 600 pounds, they weighed far less than half of what a Rolls Merlin or Allison weighed, yet produced about the same amount of horsepower and were much more reliable.

How a turbine works:

The diagrams on the following page describe the process of how a turbine works. They use a principle called the Brayton Cycle, which was developed by an American engineer named George Brayton

in the 1870s. As it applies to a gas turbine, the Brayton has the following steps:

- 1) Ambient air is drawn into the engine and compressed.
- 2) The compressed air goes into a combustion chamber where it is mixed with fuel and ignited.
- 3) The resulting explosion sends heated and expanding air through the blades of a turbine or a series of turbines to rotate a drive shaft.

The engine:

The Lycoming T-55 turbine engine was designed in the mid-1950s at the Lycoming Turbine Engine Division in Stratford, Connecticut. It was designed as a scaled-up version of the older T-53 and was

Continued on page 15

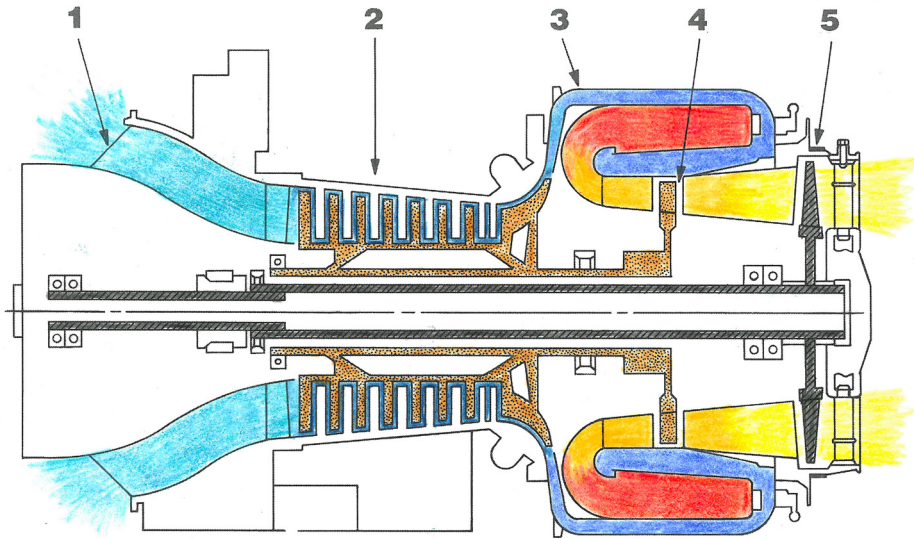
SUCK

Air is sucked into the intake (1).

COLD SECTION

SQUEEZE

The air passes through a series of seven rotating blades and stationary stator vanes (2) to become compressed, then exits through a diffuser section into the combustor section (3), where it reverses direction and is mixed with jet fuel that enters the engine through 28 fuel nozzles.



BANG!

HOT SECTION

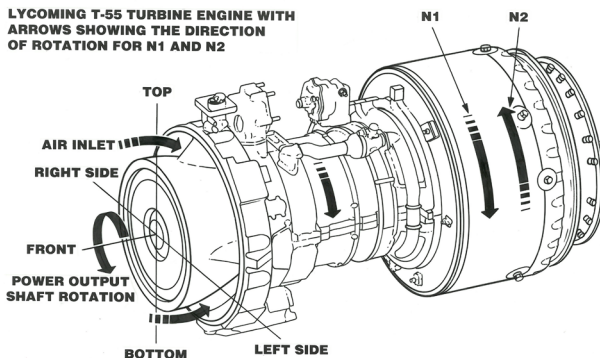
BLOW

The compressed air/fuel mixture is ignited in the combustor assembly (colored red). The resulting explosion of rapidly expanding gases then reverses direction and rushes from the combustion chamber toward two sets of fan blades.

The fast-moving gases first pass through two N1 turbine wheels (4), which are sometimes called gas-producing wheels or "GP" wheels. Like blowing on a pin wheel, those gases cause the wheel to spin in a counter-clockwise direction, which then turns a hollow shaft that drives the blades in the compressor (brown). The gases then pass through the N2 turbine wheels (5), which are sometimes called power turbine or "PT" wheels. The gases cause them to rotate in a clockwise direction, which then spins the drive shaft (colored black). The drive shaft rotates inside the hollow shaft of the compressor assembly and exits the engine at the end where the air had entered, or toward the bow of the hydroplane. The drive shaft then goes to a gearbox, which then drives the propeller shaft, which passes underneath the engine and to the boat's propeller. Meanwhile, the hot gases exit the engine through a large exhaust pipe.



LYCOMING T-55 TURBINE ENGINE WITH ARROWS SHOWING THE DIRECTION OF ROTATION FOR N1 AND N2



Timothy Johnson



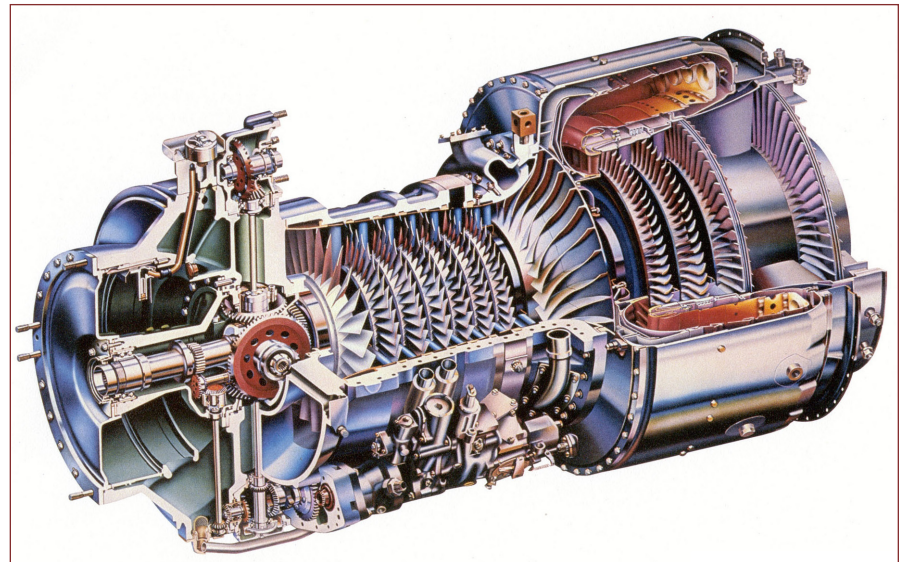
The Boeing Ch-47 Chinook helicopter was powered by the Lycoming T-55 turbine.

built for use in the Boeing CH-47 Chinook helicopter, a workhorse of the U.S. Army.

The L-7 derivative of the engine, the model that is used in hydroplanes, was designed in the early 1960s and was first delivered for use in a CH-47B helicopter in July 1963. It was an updated version of its older sister the L-5, in that it introduced atomizing fuel nozzles to eliminate hot spots in the combustor and a more uniform temperature profile for the gases that drove the turbine. A total of 1,471 of the L-7 units were built and delivered between 1963 and 1968 and it was used extensively during the Vietnam War.

To put the age of the Lycoming T-55 in perspective, when the Rolls Merlin and Allison engines were

deemed to be getting too old in the mid-1980s, it had been about 50 years since those engines were designed and first built, about 40



years since the engines were extensively used in fighter planes, and they had been powering hydroplanes for over 30 years. The Lycoming T-55, L-7 was designed almost 60 years ago, it was used in helicopters about 50 years ago, and has been used by hydroplanes for the past 30 years.

Installed in a hydroplane:

Compared with a piston engine, the installation of a turbine is quite simple. A turbine is air-cooled, so there aren't any water lines. The

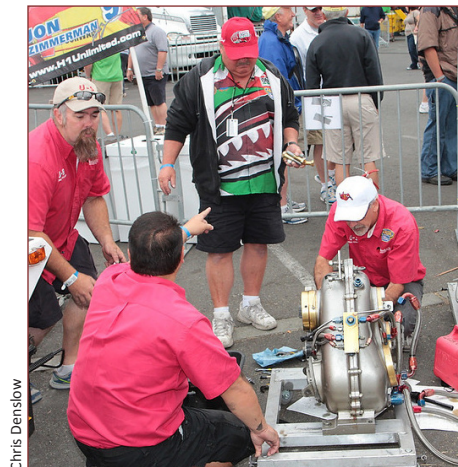
engines also have a self-contained oil system, so there is no need for oil lines. The only things connecting it to the boat are fuel lines, a battery, the throttle, and the cables that transmit engine speed and temperature readings.

The drive shaft emerges from the front of the engine and is connected to a V-drive gearbox that is located just behind the driver's seat. That spinning shaft activates a series of gears in the gear box that drive the prop shaft, which then passes underneath the engine and eventually to the propeller, which

is located under the transom at the rear of the boat.

There are only three ways to extract additional power from a turbine: 1) Increase the amount of fuel going into the combustor, 2) Increase the efficiency of the compressor by tightening the clearances between the rotors and stators, or 3) Adjusting a governor that limits the speed of the N2 turbine.

The first and third of these options are governed by the rules, however, and will make a good topic for another Technical Talk someday in the future.



The crew of an unlimited hydro working on the V-drive gear box.

HydroFile

Race Team News



Lon Erickson

U-1 MISS HOMESTREET BANK

The Madison Racing team has updated the new paint scheme and is bringing back the “shark” to go with the new HomeStreet colors. The latest variation will have a lighter shade of blue with silver replacing the white color from the original mockup. The hull is prepped and waiting painting to start later this month. In the photo below, crew chief Larry Hanson prepares the hull for its new paint job.



Madison Racing Facebook



MCR Photo

Go3 RACING

As the hull waits in the shop (bottom), Ed Cooper’s team continues its search of sponsors for the 2016 season. Cooper was in Lakeland, Florida, recently watching his driver, Jimmy King, compete in the 5-liter inboard class at the Orange Cup. (below)



John Howe



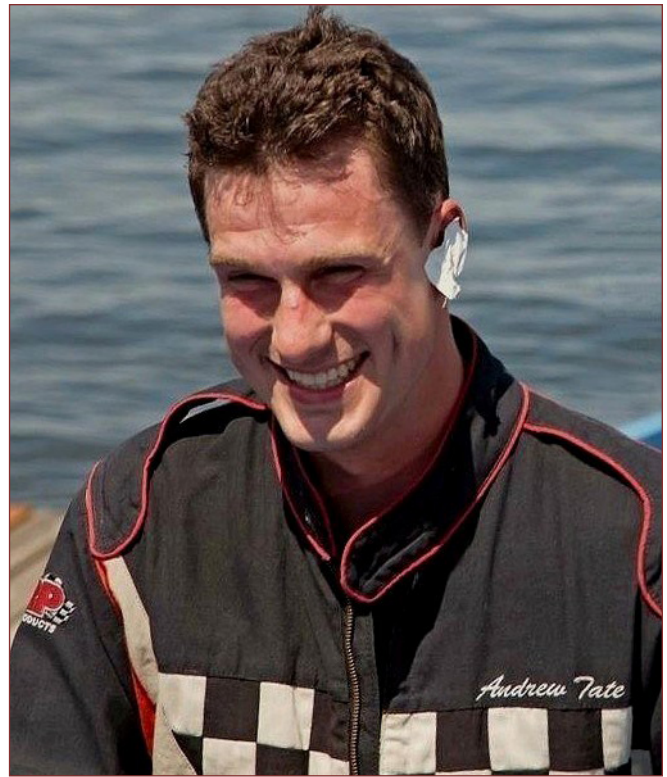
Go3 Racing Facebook

U-9 JONES RACING

Multiple sources have reported that Jones Racing will have Andrew Tate (right and below), son of former unlimited driver Mark Tate, in the cockpit for 2016. Andrew had an opportunity to get some seat time and test in the Jones hydro during the 2015 spring testing on the Columbia River at Tri-Cities. He is an accomplished inboard 5-liter champion and looks to make the move into the unlimited ranks.



Lon Erickson



Lon Erickson

U-11 URG MISS PETERS & MAY

Owner Scott Raney showed some of the off-season work they do to test and measure the fuel distribution volume and spray pattern inside the turbine engine. Shown below is an atomizer flow test tool they use to check the flow pattern. Work is also being done on a gear-drive assembly inside the T-55 turbine that powers the oil pump, starter, and fuel control.



U-11 Facebook Page



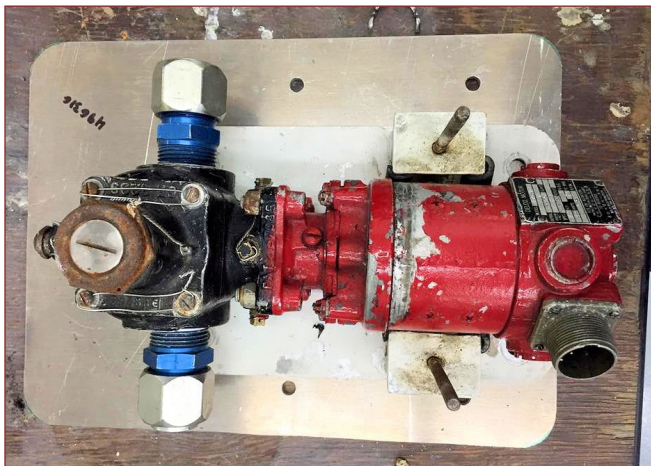
U-11 Instagram Photo

U-18 BUCKET LIST RACING

There is some discussion underway once the Bucket List hull is repaired, for the boat to be used as a testing platform for new drivers coming into the unlimited ranks. No further details are known at this time, but we will monitor any developments. As work continues rebuilding the damaged U-18 hull, Kelly Stocklin also works on milling new propellers for race teams (right).

U-21 GO FAST TURN LEFT RACING

Brian Perkins reports that Tuesday crew shop nights are back in swing at the GFTL shop. Brian has started each Tuesday posting a photo on his Facebook page of a piece of the U-21 hardware that most fans don't get a chance to see. Guess the components below.



Brian Perkins



Brian Perkins



Bucket List Racing Facebook

U-27 WIGGINS RACING

Winter hull upgrades and work continues in the Wiggins shop. The bottom of the hull is painted and complete (below). The hull has been rolled back over and top deck work is underway (facing page).



Wiggins Racing Facebook



Wiggins Racing Facebook



Wiggins Racing Facebook

U-100 LELAND RACING

Some of the Leland crew members have been back at the shop recently getting some hardware cleaned up and prepped, such as the turbine case pictured below. They are also working on some upgrades to a smaller class inboard at the shop right now. Driver Kevin Eacret and the team report they have been working on sponsorship opportunities for 2016.



Philip Eacret Facebook

U-96 ELLSTROM RACING

With most of the Ellstrom hydro repairs and upgrades done after the 2015 season, attention has recently been on another form of racing for the Ellstroms. Erick's son, Sven Ellstrom, and his navigator, Matt Rutz, have been competing in an Ellstrom Racing modified Polaris RZR 1000 off-road racer (right). The series is called the Ultra4 Racing series. Much of the help constructing the vehicle was done at the Ellstrom shop with assistance from Mike Hanson, Jeff Minor, and Troy Holmberg, all crewmembers from the unlimited race team.



Ellstrom Racing Facebook

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**NEXT MEETING OF
 UNLIMITEDS UNANIMOUS**

**Sunday, April 10, 2016
 Meeting starts at 2 p.m.**

Bellevue Public Library, Room 4
 1111 110th Avenue NE
 Bellevue, Washington 98004

YOU ARE WELCOME TO ATTEND!