

Regatta Review

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Hello Gold Cup fans! We have lots of exciting news for you in this issue, from team news to awards and more.

PRECISION PERFORMANCE ENGINEERING PURCHASES THE BUD HULLS

Indianapolis, Indiana: Precision Performance Engineering, LLC (DBA) U-5 Racing, a second year unlimited hydroplane team that finished fifth in National High Points in 2005 has entered into an agreement with Lakeland, Florida based Hydroplanes, Inc. to purchase a significant amount of the remaining assets of the Miss Budweiser racing team including the two newest hulls known as the T-5 and T-6 and supporting racing equipment.

The addition of the two new hulls brings the team to three including the boat raced in 2005. The team plans to race two of the three boats at all seven events in the 2006 American Boat Racing Association Unlimited Hydroplane Series. The U-5 team will once again be sponsored by Formula Boats of Decatur, Indiana, a nationally recognized manufacturer of quality recreational powerboats.

Mike Weber will return as the driver of the U-5 / "formulaboats.com" as well as taking on the additional responsibility of team manager for both teams. The second boat will be the registered as the U-7. Driver and sponsorship information is undecided at this time. Precision Performance Engineering, LLC also of Decatur, acquired the U-5 racing team from former owner Chad Sanderson of Auburn, Indiana last month.

The teams will be based in Decatur. For more team information during the 2006 season go to www.U-5racing.com.

BILLY SCHUMACHER PURCHASES THE U-8 HULL AND EQUIPMENT

Two-time Gold Cup winner Billy Schumacher (1967, 1968) has purchased the U-8 which ran for a good number of years as the Miss LLumar Window Film.

He plans to change almost nothing. The shop, crew, driver, etc will remain the same and Bill Wurster will stay on as an advisor.

As recently as two seasons ago, Bill had talked about driving again and trying to be the youngest and oldest driver to win the Gold Cup. But now he says he might not even take it for a ride.

TEAM RUNDOWN FOR 2006

U-1 Elam Plus - driver: Dave Villwock

The boat is being rebuilt and improved for 2006.

U-2 Jim Harvey Motorsports - driver: J Michael Kelly
Looking for a national sponsor at this time.

U-3 Cooper Racing - driver: Jimmy King
No new news but I expect to see them on the full circuit.

U-5/U-7 Formula Boats - driver Mike Weber and (to be announced)
See story above.

U-6 Oh Boy! Oberto / Miss Madison - driver: Steve David
The boat is being repaired after San Diego and improvements are being made.

U-8 owner: Bill Schumacher - driver: Jean Theoret
See story above.

U-10 USA Racing Partners - driver: Nate Brown
They have a new and larger boat shop at the Las Vegas Speedway and Nate Brown is preparing the ex-Bud (T3) hull for 2006 ... no major changes to it.

U-13 owner: Dave Bartush - driver: Terry Troxell
The boat is in a new shop in Seattle and being greatly rebuilt. Owner Dave Bartush reports that the hull was in far worse shape than expected, and about it holding together as well as it did last year said "sometimes ignorance is bliss". Dave also says that the seat is Terry's for as long as he wants it.

U-21 owner: Kevin Aylesworth - driver: Kevin Aylesworth?
The team is completely re-doing the U-25 they purchased from Ken Muscatel at the San Diego race last year. They expect to run the entire circuit in 2006.

U-99/U-100 owner: Fred Leland
No new news.

So - it looks like we will have 11 boats on the circuit this year - maybe more. It appears that the competition will be very close and top-notch!

TERRY TROXELL WINS A VERY PRESTIGIOUS APBA AWARD!

The 2005 recipient of the Bruce Broussard Meritorious Service Award is Terry Troxell.

This award is based on a points system for active membership in APBA and service at the club, regional, and national levels.

Over his 35 years as a member of APBA, Terry Troxell has been active on all levels of APBA service. On the national level, he has served the Inboard category as a Commissioner

as well as a member of the Board of Governors. On the local level, he has been a club officer for Tacoma Inboard Racing Club; also, he has served as a Race Chairman as well as a Race Official. In Region 10, he has also served as a Region Officer and a Race Official.

Terry, a Hall of Champions inductee, has distinguished himself as a leader for APBA on the race course as well. Prior to racing Unlimited hydroplanes, he was a serious and successful competitor in many inboard racing classes. He is probably best known for his success with the Stinger Racing team, owned by Bob Schultz; Terry won many national, divisional and region titles. Terry reached the pinnacle of our sport when he won the APBA Gold Cup in Detroit in 2005.

Congratulations Terry!

Thanks to the 2004 recipient, Ann Fitzgerald, for this story.

THE DRRA AND CHRYSLER JEEP SUPERSTORES WIN ABRA AWARDS

On March 4, at the ABRA Annual Meeting and Awards Banquet held in Indianapolis, the DRRA was acknowledged with a Special Contribution Award for its contributions to the sport of unlimited hydroplane racing and the Chrysler-Jeep Superstores were acknowledged as Race Site Sponsors of the year.

In accepting the award for the Superstore dealers, DRRA's Joe Schulte said: "Jim Schebil, Mark Snethkamp, Mike and Jim Riehl... all of the Chrysler-Jeep dealers are much more than sponsors to us in Detroit... they are partners in every sense of the word. Because of their support the great tradition of the Gold Cup lives on. We could not do it without them".

When presented with the Special Contribution Award by Sam Cole, Chairman of the ABRA, Joe observed that without the dedication and hard work of the eight team owners who made the Unlimited Series such a success in 2005, awards such as this wouldn't be possible. "Looking ahead, we know that 2006 will be even more exciting."

THE 2006 WINTER VINTAGE GATHERING

Tom and Jacq Bertolini again hosted a winter gathering for the Vintage class participants. Photos including Ken Warby with his World Water Speed Record trophy can be found on Bill John's web site at:

<http://www.vintageraceboatshop.com/APBAVintageWinterGathering-2006.htm>

LOTS OF INFO FROM LAST WEEKENDS ABRA BANQUET ON THEIR SITE

See the ABRA site for lots more info about last weekend's meetings and banquet in Indianapolis. There are also 6 great interviews with the likes of Bill Schumacher and Steve David. <http://www.abrahydroplanes.com>

KIT MUNCEY REMEMBERED

By Fred Farley - ABRA Unlimited Historian

I was deeply saddened to learn of the death of Mary "Kit" Muncey- McIntosh, who passed away on February 14, 2006.

Kit Muncey was the first wife of boat racing great Bill Muncey. Kit's daughter-in-law, Debi Muncey, sent along the following note:

"She was the First Lady of boat racing for a number of years, having been married to Bill Muncey for 17 years. Her passing was not unexpected inasmuch as she had been battling an inoperable brain tumor for decades. Those who knew her, knew what a strong and vibrant woman she was. "She was a dramatic and dynamic influence on the racing scene in her day. Sadly, in her prime, she was diagnosed with an inoperable brain tumor and the limelight was not the place for her any longer. I feel very fortunate that we and Wil's brothers were all able to be at her side when her time came."

Kit was a well-known and respected member of the Unlimited hydroplane community in the 1950s and `60s. She exuded a great dignity and was always a credit to her husband and to the sport. She was genuinely nice.

I had the opportunity to work with Kit in the early 1980s. She was remarried at the time to a wonderful gentleman named Wally McIntosh. I was associated with BOATRACING MAGAZINE, which was published by Wil Muncey, Jr. Wil prevailed upon his mother to write a few columns for the magazine and assigned me to be her editor.

It was a rewarding experience. I found her to be incredibly talented. Kit really should have been my editor instead of the other way around.

In 1972, Kit wrote what is perhaps the most perceptive article ever written by a boat racing "insider" for THE SEATTLE TIMES. She and Bill had been divorced for three years. But nowhere is she petty or vindictive as she tells the compelling story of hydroplane competition from a wife's perspective.

Kit writes of a time when the safety technology was nowhere near as advanced as it is today- before the introduction (in 1986) of the F-16 canopy.

The following is reprinted in her honor.

14 YEARS ON THE SIDELINES: A WIFE'S VIEW OF ROOSTERTAILING

By Kit Muncey

The world of hydro racing as seen from the outside is one thing; from the inside, as a driver's wife, it is another thing altogether.

I spent 14 years of a 17-year marriage on the sidelines, watching the unlimiteds throw up roostertails, seeing bodies careening through the air, hearing sirens screaming from the pits, watching newsmen crane their cameras for a better angle of the victims and the survivors - in my case, the wife.

Eleven of my friends are dead from this game, nine from hydros, and the two others violently; so I speak from a vantage point that is perhaps not so happy as for the fan sipping beer before his TV set or watching through binoculars above a sunny lake.

It began on our honeymoon when my husband said: "Honey, we're going to Fort Lauderdale."

"To visit your parents?"

"Nope! I'm gonna race a 225 hydro."

I should have known then. That should have given me a hint of what was ahead, warned me; but I was young, life was to be an adventure; and I wouldn't have believed how exciting, and exacting, or foreseen how taxing a life.

What began as a sport and a pastime became a preoccupation for him and then finally the most important thing in his life, as my husband graduated from small hydroplanes, which he owned himself and raced on the Eastern circuit, to unlimiteds which he eventually jockeyed all over the United States.

From a 16-foot boat driven by an automobile engine, to a 30-foot machine propelled by one and two airplane power plants; from speeds of 112, to a record-breaking mile run at 200 miles an hour, he fought his way through the speed and danger range.

Racing on the big circuit meant that we traveled a lot. We went to Las Vegas, Reno, Tahoe, Detroit, Washington, D. C., Seattle, Sacramento, San Diego, Coeur d'Alene, Chelan, to Kelowna in Canada.

There was variety. We went off alone water skiing on Lake Coeur d'Alene; plenty of smooth water, mountains, privacy. We gambled in Nevada's palaces beside millionaires and bums. We met gangsters and a President, movie actresses and actors, governors and clowns. We rode in parades, in a blimp, in countless jets, private planes, on motorcycles, in yachts, in chauffeured limousines. We were wined, dined and entertained from coast to coast.

Sometimes it was fun. Sometimes it was exciting, often enlightening, often illuminating, always varied.

But not at the race, not for me. The race was always a trial, a test of my fortitude and of my husband's courage, his skill.

A hydroplane is a boat that is designed to ride lightly over the water, with only three points

of her hull actually touching when underway, and with her propeller one blade at a time in the water. Because the prop is surface riding, a long plume follows the craft, making a spectacular and dramatic picture. This plume is called a roostertail. It contains tons of water and becomes an obstacle, a weapon, a stratagem.

All sorts of ideas have been tried by designers to make hydros go faster. Boats have progressed from the oversize runabouts to hydroplanes; from cigar shape to pitchfork. Engines have been used singly, two in tandem and side by side. Aircraft engines have been converted, their gearbox changed from twisting a propeller through the air to screwing one over the water; from a 1-3 ratio to a 3-1 ratio.

Carburetors are modified for better breathing of the engine, ignition systems are altered to reduce the possibility of crossfire, and the cooling has to be changed to give more protection to engine parts that will be forced to higher speeds. Special fuels are created. Additives are combined until a boat is not a boat, not a plane, but a screaming power plant. It is held together with ingenuity and skill and maneuvered over the water by a man who has to have those qualities, plus guts.

While we were married, my husband, Bill Muncey, won every major unlimited event, many of them several times. He captured the Gold Cup four times, the Governor's Cup three times, the President's Cup four times. Other trophies filled our house and the Seattle Yacht Club with silver and gold as he went on to build a record that has not been equaled. All this attracts and creates a human environment out of the money and terror of racing, one in which you find yourself in a psychological pit that has little to do with servicing hydros, but a great deal to do with testing people.

The wives, or "ladies in waiting," are often extremely attractive. I enjoy knowing gals like Sandy Wilson who breeds, trains and shows horses; Penny Simon, who looks like a college girl, though she has 10 children; the beautiful Bardahl sisters; gracious Edith Rhodes; Betty Musson, the ex-model with the volatile temperament; the serene Faye Brow, and the wives of the crew members who thoughtfully make small talk to distract a driver's wife, and come to race after race to reinforce their men, spending long hours in tedium.

The world of unlimited-hydroplane racing is a unique environment, one in which you have to be an initiate, or you can't understand the language. "Who's she?" someone often asks at the race.

"A lizard," is a common reply. Though not easily translated, it is a precise enough term.

These are strictly amateur women whose dedication to the sport is evidenced by their presence in the guarded, exclusive areas of the pits. They lounge behind roped-off sections and in private viewing stands.

They wear badges which prove their right to be close to the boats - and to the men who own, manage and run the boats. It's these badges that separate the participants from the spectators,

the men from the boys, the friends from the fans.

Wives can spot pit lizards at 500 yards. Fortunately for me, my husband was a moral, deepwater Baptist, and these creatures were part of the scenery.

There were all kinds of feminine flora and fauna. For instance, there was Mary. She was usually called "Big" Mary, because she was a smashing six feet of pulchritude who wore striking clothes, and - always - a large hat. One year one of the boat owners, a man of robust reputation, paid Big Mary \$100 a day to wear a bathing suit with a big hat. No one wore bathing suits in the pits, but she did and went everywhere.

The lizard that would raise the hackles on any wife's neck I met one evening at the Seattle Yacht Club, posed against the bar flaunting a sable boa. Not married, she was dramatic, dark and devastating. Black Russian in hand, she announced: "I'm with that driver over there."

She pointed to a man I knew well. Laughing, she proclaimed that: "His wife's here in town but, Honey, she won't be allowed in the pits or near the boat."

That was part of this female's particular terms, her victory and claim to fame.

There is something about sudden death in racing that upsets people. Even the men who court it. It's bad enough when it is a distinct possibility; but quite another when it starts happening to one after another of your friends, as it did in unlimited racing several years ago.

I remember the accidents. I remember the funerals. I remember running a long distance from a barge on Lake Washington along a floating rampway to reach an ambulance before a thrashing rescue helicopter set down when Bill Muncey's Miss Thriftway hit a Coast Guard picket boat.

I made it with the help of many uniformed and anxious people who cleared the way. I remember their faces saying: "Hope he lives!"

The rocketing ride to the hospital with three motorcycle-police escorts was a scene from Mission Impossible. The emergency-room routine is a nightmare; harried aides in blood-spattered white hand out pieces of clothing as they are cut off.

Later, Bill addressed the press from his hospital bed. Exhausted, his best friend perhaps dead, his boat damaged, he faced the cameras and made a speech to the effect that he would be out there next week.

"A little rest, a new boat, a few bandages and I'll race again. Certainly."

Well, a hero is a hero. Everything he says has to reflect happy resolution, defiant courage, complete confidence. The lot of the warrior who remains standing is not all easy. He has to learn to act.

When confronted with the carnage of the past few years, a racer has to come to some private appraisal or reappraisal of his choice of livelihood. The sport itself makes an effort at self-preservation, establishing safety-study committees. Every competitor has to belong to the American Power Boat Association. Drivers have to take yearly physicals, produce a pilot's certificate and qualify in their boats before a first race.

The boats are checked by measurers and by a safety committee. Owners have vital engine parts dye-checked and x-rayed. The A. P. B. A. requires compulsory insurance for drivers, and many owners add to this.

My husband was insured with Lloyds of London for \$100,000. I have no idea what the premium on that one was. Owners usually contract to pay all hospital bills.

The families stand the tab for the funerals, take care of the maimed and visit the graves.

A racer remains aloof, however, throughout the funerals (he never fails to attend, even if it means hiring a jet to get there), through the interviews, through the stints on special committees where, in the name of research, he sees reels of TV and movie film, enlarged photos (especially the ones with the little arrow showing what part of the exploding debris is the driver's body flying through the air).

He inspects the remains of the risen craft, the torn remnants of the victim's clothing, the parachute that didn't open, the helmet that whipped a head back to break a neck, life jackets that were not buoyant, life jackets that were but floated a man face down. He reviews the entire expert, detailed testimony of rescue workers and medicine men.

He has to help decide why the boats crash. Why so many accidents? The first year, all the explanations got used up. Veterans became hard pressed to find reasons the public would buy. New ones, that is. Now they are silent. It is fate. Kismet is the additive in every gas tank.

They do what they can to redesign the boats, revise rules and equipment and give this information to the press, turning their backs on the truth. Indeed, as in war, the only thing to do is to walk away, with calm deliberation, from the facts that cannot be changed. For the true problem is the battlefield.

Unlimited contests were set up years ago with slower boats owned by rich playboys, using "backyards," courses arranged near the exclusive yacht club and the cocktail lounge; and later by the people who wanted to see everything, wanted a theater, a place to watch.

Then it became public entertainment, like the Roman circuses. The battlefields eventually were enshrined by the media and by tradition until their real value as race courses was secondary. Races were set on courses obviously like Detroit because of public demand. Today there is no way to change this institutional pattern of the regattas. They are often run in unlikely, unsafe places on waters not fit for ice breakers or ocean tugs.

Drivers have come to realize that there is no way to change these sites. Furthermore, they must seek more places to run, new sponsors, and new waters. They have succeeded in adding to their circuit. Though cities have abandoned regattas because of annoyances like riots, no city calls off a race because of a driver fatality. This adds to its spectator appeal and increases the gate.

I always was asked by interviewers if I worried, if I feared for my husband's life. I did not. But there were others twisted by anxiety. I secretly felt they did not belong in racing and pitied them. People would tell me it was a miracle that Bill had survived his accident in Madison, Ind., when his boat disintegrated at 180 miles an hour. In photographs, it looked like an explosion. Or when he rammed the Coast Guard boat on Lake Washington at 175, sinking both boats.

I agreed. It did not take grit to be me; it only took faith in God.

For my husband, and for many others, it took valor to keep going out on courses that had taken and broken men like themselves - often.

Today I wonder about that moment when his boat floats free, away from the dock, the five-minute gun is about to be fired and it is time to start up the engine; that moment when he is completely alone, and fear fills his whole consciousness. I wonder which old friend helps him reach out for the starter, which phantom is there with him?

Now there is a whole new group of people in racing. This is good because as more and more new faces appear, the ghosts of the others fade. Crew chiefs who saw blood on their hands have left the sport to others, to drivers who are so new they know names like Brow, Campbell, Fageol, Fults, Gardner, Manchester, Musson, Stead, Thompson only as engravings on trophies.

The new racers are strapping on helmets and pulling the primers on craft that sometimes are untested, fresh from the paint shop and design board, and going out to win.

Fortunately these men do not remember. The veteran is unique, and I imagine that the throng of people around him must fill the pit area with enthusiasm, anticipation and excitement, closing out the ghosts.

Or can they?

[Kit Muncey is the former wife of Bill Muncey. They were divorced in 1969.]

(Reprinted from THE SEATTLE TIMES, July 30, 1972)

- Brian Reed - DRRA Volunteer