

Regatta Review

Issue #71 - May 22, 2008

SAD NEWS - JUDY D'EATH PASSED AWAY

It is with a heavy heart that we lead off this newsletter with news of the passing of Judy D'Eath on May 20th.

Judy, alongside her husband Tom, was instrumental in forming the Detroit River Regatta Association and presenting the 2003 APBA Gold Cup event after the previous organization was unable to do so. They did this in an impossibly short time-frame of a couple months.

Tom and Judy were also involved with getting the APBA Vintage and Historic division organized and ran that together for a number of years.

Judy was always at Tom's side whether he was racing, running an event or just stirring things up. She really cared about the people she met in boat racing, and she said so and let it show.

This is a tremendous shock and loss to Tom and their kids, and the rest of us as well.

Rest in peace, Judy D'Eath. Your contribution to the sport will not be forgotten.

Our thoughts and prayers go out to Tom and the family.

D'EATH, Judith A., 61, of Mount Dora, Florida, passed away on Tuesday, May 20, 2008. She was born in The Village of Grosse Pointe Farms, MI. Mrs. D'Eath worked as an accountant in the construction industry. She was an avid boater, enjoyed sewing and knitting and was a member of the Sunnyland Chapter of the Antique and Classic Boat Society, the American Powerboat Association and the Classic Raceboat Association.

Mrs. D'Eath is survived by her husband Thomas, children; Diana (John) Griffith of Orion Township, MI and Scott (Jennifer) D'Eath of Algonac, MI., grandchildren Olivia and Madeline Griffith and Michael and Kayla D'Eath, sister; Linda Dillabough of Warren, MI, and brothers, Ronald (Vicky) Corriveau of Chesterfield Township, MI and John (Kathy) Corriveau of Harrison Township, MI.

Funeral service:

10:00 a.m. Wednesday, May 28th, at Immaculate Conception Church, 7051 Church Road, Ira Township, MI, with Rev. David G. Burgard, officiating.

Visitation:

Tuesday, May 27th, from 2-9 p.m. at Gendernalik Funeral Home, Inc., 35259 Twenty-Three Mile Road, New Baltimore, MI 48047. (586) 725-0177 -- <http://www.gendernalikfh.com>

Additional visitation is 9:30 a.m. Wednesday at the church, until time of service at 10. In lieu of flowers, please make memorial contributions on behalf of Judy D'Eath to the Antique and Classic Boat Society Scholarship Fund, P. O. Box 689, Mount Dora, FL 32757.

Thanks to those whose words I used in this story, Steve Montgomery, Fred Farley, and DRRA board members.

"A GOLD CUP TO REMEMBER"

The Detroit River Regatta Association invites you to "A Gold Cup To Remember", A Celebration of the 100th Running of the APBA Gold Cup.

Saturday July 12th, 7:00pm - 11:00pm at the Events Tent in Waterworks Park.

Tickets are \$50 / person and space is limited to 250 so get your reservation in early to be a part of this historic Celebration of Gold Cup racing.

The evening will include: Barbeque Dinner, Cash Bar, Special Video Presentation and recognition of Gold Cup Winning Drivers and Owners.

For Reservations or Information call the DRRA office at (586) 774-0980 or email to moreinfo@gold-cup.com .

The Celebration flyer can be seen at: <http://www.gold-cup.com/news/08/celebration.html>

**THE DOSSIN BROTHERS REMEMBERED
BY FRED FARLEY - ABRA HISTORIAN**

The Motor City of Detroit, Michigan, has served as home base for some of Unlimited hydroplane racing's most celebrated teams. This was especially the case during the decade immediately following World War II.

Owners such as Herb Mendelson, Horace Dodge, Albin Fallon, Jack Schafer, Joe Schoenith, Bud Saile, and George Simon all helped to put Detroit on the boat racing map. There were also the Dossin brothers.

Between 1946 and 1956, Roy, Walter, and Russell Dossin owned and/or sponsored four different Unlimiteds and enjoyed considerable success. They won the 1947 APBA Gold Cup with MISS PEPS V, a remodeled pre-war campaigner. And their twin-Allison- powered MISS PEPSI was the last formidable step hydroplane.

Power boat racing had been dormant during the war years. Most of the boats that participated in 1946 and 1947 were holdovers from the pre-war era. The Gold Cup Class of the American Power Boat Association and its counterpart, the 725 Cubic Inch Class of the Mississippi Valley Power Boat Association, had combined and changed over to what became the APBA Unlimited

Class. This was to take advantage of the huge supply of war surplus Allison and Rolls-Royce Merlin V-12 aircraft engines that were now available for sale to the general public.

The Dossin brothers owned a Pepsi Cola distributorship. But they sponsored the boats themselves. According to Ernie Dossin III (Russell Dossin's grandson), "The brothers were not happy with the Pepsi Cola company not taking an interest in the boat. The brothers got involved because of their own interest in boats, but felt strongly that, as the boat campaigned in a number of states, the parent company should have participated in the sponsorship."

The Dossin family involvement with Unlimited racing began with a modest pact between the Dossins and fellow Detroiters Howard "Whitey" Hughes in 1946. Hughes, a local machine shop owner, had a boat called the DUKIE, which had raced before the war as the 725 Class WARNIE. Renamed PEPSI COLA III, it was one of the first Unlimiteds with a commercial sponsor.

With Bill Stroh as driver, PEPSI COLA III placed third in the 1946 President's Cup at Washington, D.C.. According to Ernie Dossin, "The 1946 boat was a mere blip on the screen of the Dossin family interest in boating. That end-of-season sponsorship was at best incidental to the future of the boats that followed."

The 1947 season saw the first true national circuit for Unlimited hydroplanes. Four races--the Ford Memorial, the APBA Gold Cup, the Silver Cup, and the President's Cup--counted for APBA National Points.

The top boat of 1947 was the brothers' MISS PEPS V. At the time, commercial sponsorships were permitted but frowned upon. In accordance with custom, MISS PEPS V did not carry the full product name into competition. The Roman Numeral "V" was supposed to promote the 5-cent Pepsi Cola bottle being sold at the time.

With Danny Foster driving, MISS PEPS V won the Ford Memorial, the APBA Gold Cup, and the President's Cup, while NOTRE DAME captured the Silver Cup with Dan Arena at the wheel.

MISS PEPS V, which measured about 23-1/2 feet in length, had originally used half of a Curtiss Conqueror when she raced as SO-LONG in 1939. It was a non-propriding three-point hydroplane and a product of the famed Ventnor Boat Works of Ventnor, New Jersey. The Dossins commissioned Foster to install an Allison in the PEPS. And he did. But Danny had to literally hang the cockpit over the transom in order to make room for that enormous engine.

The Ford Memorial Regatta at Detroit almost went to DUKIE, powered by an 8-cylinder Hispano-Suiza.. Driven by Whitey Hughes, DUKIE won the first two heats but couldn't start in Heat Three. MISS PEPS V was the only boat to finish the 45-mile race. Her fastest heat was 53.928 miles per hour, compared to DUKIE's 57.783.

The APBA Gold Cup was run on extremely rough water at Jamaica Bay, New York. NOTRE DAME won the first heat of 30 miles, but MISS PEPS V rebounded to win the next two. Heat Three featured a good battle for first and second between PEPS and MISS GREAT LAKES with owner/driver Al Fallon. Foster did 56.256 to Fallon's 55.667 in the almost ocean-like chop.

The 90-mile Silver Cup on the Detroit River proved to be an off- day for MISS PEPS V, which made a bad start in Heat One and failed to finish in Heat Two.

The President's Cup was a three-heat grand slam for MISS PEPS V. Foster won the first heat by a wide margin at 70.063 on a 2-1/2 mile course. Danny then throttled way down in Heats Two and Three to make a race of it with the Deussenberg-powered NOTRE DAME.

MISS PEPS V proved conclusively at Washington that the good fortune of MISS GREAT LAKES with Allison power in 1946 was no fluke. The Thunderboat Era had most assuredly begun. For the next four decades, Unlimited hydroplanes would have to pretty much depend on World War II fighter aircraft power sources to be competitive.

The Dossin brothers retired their 1947 National Champion and replaced it with a larger boat for 1948. MISS PEPS V was sold to Stan Dollar of San Francisco in 1949 and renamed SHORT SNORTER. Dollar drove it to victory in the Mapes Trophy at Lake Tahoe in 1953.

According to Ernie Dossin, "Danny Foster was the real motivator to get the family into boating. He was always a `super salesman' type of guy. I believe that Danny has confessed that he had no idea whether hanging the driver's seat over the water would work. The brothers were absolutely awed by the success of MISS PEPS V."

After the 1947 Season, the Dossin brothers parted company with Foster. At about the same time, Clell Perry came to them with a new design for an Unlimited hydroplane. And the Dossins accepted. Perry had won the Gold Cup in 1937 as driver of NOTRE DAME.

Perry's creation used a single Allison and was named MISS PEPSI. Prejudice against commercial sponsorships was still widespread. The use of a product name so incensed YACHTING MAGAZINE columnist Mel Crook that he refused to acknowledge the boat in print by anything other than its APBA registration number of G-99. The Dossins never forgave Crook for this.

The MISS PEPSI of 1948 was a step hydroplane and measured 34 feet in length. Perry built it in his garage in Anchor Bay, north of Detroit. One of the unique factors about the boat was that it had no side. The deck and the bottom met at an edge. Another factor which Clell took pride in was that he had taken the hood of a Hudson and hammered it in copper for the top bow piece of the boat.

Today, most pictures of MISS PEPSI show it being towed, which is how it spent most of 1948. Perry drove it himself the first season. He participated in five races but only finished one heat all year.

It should be noted that Clell had crippled his arm in a 1938 accident with NOTRE DAME and hadn't driven in competition in ten years. Chuck Thompson, a champion outboard competitor, replaced Clell Perry as driver in 1949. Chuck went on to become one of the all-time great Unlimited drivers. He would remain as driver for the duration of the Dossin family's involvement in racing.

Thompson won no races in 1949 with the single-Allison MISS PEPSI but certainly got more out of the boat than Perry ever did. His best finish was a second-place in the Gull Lake Regatta at Battle Creek, Michigan.

By all accounts, the boat was terrible from the get-go. It did not want to get up on a plane. It roared along at slow speeds with its bow up in the air.

At one point, an engineer suggested that the crew put in self-bailers along the step. These spring-loaded gadgets would open as pressure built up inside the boat as it built up speed. Once these were installed, the vacuum which had been building up behind the step was broken and the boat settled right down in the water.

Unfortunately, even after this problem was solved, MISS PEPSI never did very well in competition. Another problem was a major flaw in the design. Since there was no freeboard or side there was no strength on the outside edges of the hull. The stress level was enormous and it had a real affect on the boat's ability to turn. The only strength was in the stringers, which held the engine. It's probably a blessing that the single Allison could never get the boat moving very fast.

Almost to the relief of the brothers, MISS PEPSI was dropped by a crane operator in New Martinsville, West Virginia, near the end of the season. That broke the boat's back and put it out of its misery.

Ernie Dossin has vivid recollections of the failure of the 1948 MISS PEPSI.

"My Uncle Walter decided that bigger was better. The boat was rolled out in the spring of 1948 and should have been rolled right back in.

"Clell Perry was a quieter person than Danny Foster but just as aggressive a salesman and was given a blank check to build the next boat.

"The three brothers went up to Algonac for the first run, which was a disaster. It just plowed through the water. I remember my Dad saying that the nose seemed to be almost straight up in the air as it went back and forth on the bay. I recall the solemn mood as darkness fell and the boat was returned to the cradle.

"This was the first of many disappointments with that boat. As the spring dragged on, Clell would announce major changes, the three brothers would trek on up to Algonac and be disappointed. "My Grand-Dad died in the spring of 1948 after one of those gruesome trips to Algonac." Because of the lack of power, Walter and Roy Dossin decided to go in a different direction with their new John Hacker-designed hull of 1950. The original plan presented to them by Hacker was a modified version of MY SWEETIE with a single engine. The brothers said forget it. They wanted power.. And that led to the twin-engine MISS PEPSI, which measured 36 feet in length and was nicknamed "The Mahogany Cigar" and "The Aquatruck."

It was Walter Dossin who insisted on two engines in tandem, mounted back-to-back between a single gear box. Walter was the family scion and liked the concept. He wanted a boat that would leave no doubt in anyone's mind that it was the fastest boat on the Detroit River.

As Ernie Dossin recalls, "The slick mahogany hull with the red, white and blue cowling was indeed a champion boat. When the two Allison engines came to life and the dark smoke rose from the stacks, it looked like a great sea monster coming to life. The engines could be heard 10 miles in any direction as it began its roar down the straightaway. It was a champion by any measure and did the sport proud.."

It certainly did! The 1950 MISS PEPSI became the fastest step hydroplane of all time. It was also the only boat--step or three-point--to truly make the twin-Allison concept work.

Ernie Dossin remembers Chuck Thompson as "a really nice fellow, with a grin that always made one think he was up to something and sometimes he was. The term that comes to mind is 'cavalier.' Chuck knew the 1948 boat was a dud but it was his shot to break out from the small boats and he knew he could talk the family into staying with boat racing. The glory of 1947 was still a very strong memory and the brothers were very persistent.

"Chuck was a constant source of jokes and playing around. For example, his reputation for roughing up the water prior to a race was annoying to fellow drivers, but he saw it as just playing around. I never saw him in a mean mood anytime on race days or when he was putting new plugs in our house as part of his small electrical contracting business.

"Uncle Walter, who I recall as generally an old grouch, was almost like a kid when the 1950 boat started running. Uncle Roy on the other hand was a nice guy but not an equal partner with Walter but certainly loved that boat as much as Walter."

All of the superlatives lavished on Hacker's MY SWEETIE in 1949 would be descriptive of MISS PEPSI (U-99) in 1950, 1951, and 1952. MISS PEPSI was the ultimate step hydroplane, capable of lap speeds 8 to 10 miles per hour faster than any other fast- stepper ever built.

A three-time President's Cup winner, MISS PEPSI was the first boat to average over 100 miles per hour in a heat of the Gold Cup (in 1952). She was one of the few boats to be truly competitive with SLO-MO-SHUN IV and SLO-MO-SHUN V, the first successful three-point prop-riders in the Unlimited Class.

If MISS PEPSI had an Achilles heel, it was her inability to go the 90-mile Gold Cup distance. She won numerous races at the 45-mile distance. But during 1951 and 1952, she could complete only one of three 30-mile heats. Not until 1956, her last season, was MISS PEPSI able to finish 90 miles in one day.

In the boat's very first competitive appearance, driver Thompson nearly pulled off a victory in the 1950 Silver Cup at Detroit. MISS PEPSI appeared to have edged out Danny Foster and SUCH CRUST I on points, 1525 to 1500. But Chuck, in a sporting gesture, admitted that he had

cut two buoys and was disqualified, although no official observer had witnessed the infraction. Foster then was declared the winner in the corrected order of finish.

But even in defeat, MISS PEPSI established herself as a solid contender. The Silver Cup format that year consisted of five heats of two laps each on a 5-nautical mile course. Thompson covered the final 10 nautical miles at an unheard of 107.394 miles per hour, based upon lap times of 107.136 and 107.654.

MISS PEPSI had little difficulty in dominating the next major race--the President's Cup in Washington, D.C.--with first-place finishes in all three heats and Potomac River records for the 2-1/2 mile lap (95.038), the 15-mile heat (88.725), and the 45-mile race (83.450). The victory marked the first in the post-war era by a twin-engine Unlimited hydroplane.

Moving on to New Martinsville, Chuck Thompson's hopes for a back-to-back triumph ended when, while leading into the first turn of the first heat, MISS PEPSI barrel-rolled at approximately 100 miles per hour and sank, injuring Thompson and mechanic Harold Beardsley. This reaffirmed for the second consecutive year the identity of New Martinsville as the hard luck city for the Dossin team, although--this time--damage to the hull was minor.

After the 1950 New Martinsville crash, Thompson never again allowed a mechanic to ride with him during a race.

A proposal to ban multi-engined entries from the Gold Cup was shelved by the APBA during the winter of 1950-51. The attempted rule change had been aimed at the Dossin brothers' MISS PEPSI, a hull that had clearly come into its own.

Chuck Thompson justified the fear of those who would have legislated his craft off the race course by winning the first three races of 1951 almost effortlessly. MISS PEPSI captured the Steel Cup in Pittsburgh and the Maple Leaf Trophy in Windsor, Ontario. And before departing for the Gold Cup in Seattle, MISS PEPSI dominated a one-heat exhibition on the St. Clair River at St. Clair, Michigan, Thompson's hometown.

The 1951 Gold Cup marked the first time that a major Unlimited race was to be run in the western United States.. Seattle was very much considered to be the hinterland of major league boat racing in those early days.

As Ernie Dossin recalls, "I remember my Dad talking about the trip west to Seattle with the boats. SUCH CRUST, MY SWEETIE, and our MISS PEPSI all traveled together.

"It took a week to get the boats there, and the trek over the mountains was slow, dry, and hot. They had a car that they would use to go ahead and have a meal and wait for the caravan to catch up.

"Going over the mountains, they were often only able to go 4 miles per hour for miles on end.

"When they finally got there, Dad said that the boats were a mess, dried out with dust over everything. I know that when MISS PEPSI got back to Detroit, Dad and Chuck had her sent immediately to Les Staudacher's shop to be refinished and to have the hull tightened. Dad said that Les had to do some serious realigning of the hull to get it back in shape."

The Seattle trip, unfortunately, proved to be a wasted effort for the Dossin team. MISS PEPSI dropped out on the fifth lap of Heat One and recorded her first DNF of the year.

Ill luck continued in the second heat when MISS PEPSI slowed to a halt in the first turn due to a loss of oil pressure.

This was most unfortunate inasmuch as MISS PEPSI had qualified fastest for the race with a 3-lap/9-mile average of 100.558--the first qualification ever at over 100 miles per hour.

The zero result notwithstanding, driver Thompson still made his presence felt in the 1951 Gold Cup. YACHTING MAGAZINE described the action of Heat One in these words:

"Coming down to the line in the closest start of recent Gold Cup history, it was SLO-MO-SHUN V over first, about 1« seconds after "60" on the clock, closely followed by HORNET, PEPSI, and GALE II.

"Lou Fageol kept the "V" in the lead, but coming out of the first turn, it was clear that Thompson was bent on hot pursuit with the PEPSI. The big Hacker-designed craft had moved into second spot. The huge crowd held its breath as they flew down the backstretch, but its partisan spirits were boosted by the sight of the hometown boat holding or improving her lead over the Dossin challenger. Yet the big test was still to come. How would they compare on the turns?

"Around the upper buoys they sped, PEPSI somewhat more smoothly than the Seattle boat, but appearing unable to gain an inch.

"Finishing the first three-mile lap, it was SLO-MO V on top. Close on her heels came PEPSI, followed by HORNET, GALE, SLO-MO IV, HURRICANE IV, SUCH CRUST, MY SWEETIE, and QUICKSILVER.

"Positions remained unchanged during the second circuit--but the crowd paid little heed to any but the two flying leaders--SLO-MO V and the closely trailing PEPSI.

"The nature of the race remained unchanged during the first four rounds. Fageol pushed Stan Sayres' new boat faster and faster.

"During these laps, PEPSI closely dogged the heels of SLO-MO V. So fast were they going that a gnat-like swarm of airplanes hovering above failed by tens of miles an hour to keep up the pace.

"Fortunately for the blood pressure of the spectators, the one- two duel between PEPSI and the "V" came to an early halt. On the first turn of the fifth circuit, the Dossin boat went dead in the water and the real race was over."

Not to be undone by one major setback, MISS PEPSI quickly resumed her winning ways and finished in first-place in every heat of the next three races: the Detroit Memorial, the Silver Cup, and the President's Cup. Granted, the Seattle-based SLO-MO-SHUN boats did not attend these races. But MISS PEPSI's amazing consistency of performance was commendable nonetheless.

At the Silver Cup in particular, Thompson and the U-99 demonstrated their stunning superiority by winning all five 12- mile heats, while the rest of the fleet wallowed in their wake. MISS PEPSI was the only boat to finish all 60 miles in her quest for the award that had been denied her due to a disqualification the year before.

So fierce was the attrition among the Silver Cup challengers that a pair of 7-Litre Class boats-- the WILDCATTER and the TOMYANN-- were recruited to fill out the field and prevent the show from collapsing into a solitary exhibition of MISS PEPSI's awesome splendor.

To the surprise of no one, MISS PEPSI won the National High Point Championship for 1951 hands down. But even that prestigious label was not enough to beat the team's New Martinsville jinx. The small West Virginia town, for the third year in a row, proved to be the Dossin family's undoing. The U-99 burned out a bearing during a warm-up session and had to withdraw from the competition.

Walter and Roy Dossin had been full-time Unlimited participants for five years now. Since the end of World War II, they had more victories--eight of them--in races that counted for National High Points than any other team. Horace Dodge, Jr., by comparison, won six races between 1946 and 1951 and Jack Schafer won three.

The 1952 season would be the Dossins last as full-time campaigners.

MISS PEPSI continued her winning ways in 1952 and was once again the High Point Champion. She triumphed in the majority of races entered, but not the Gold Cup.

Thompson won all three heats of the Maple Leaf Trophy. Joe Taggart in MISS GREAT LAKES II was the only other entrant to score any points.

The following weekend's Detroit Memorial Regatta was almost a replay of the Maple Leaf race with MISS PEPSI again winning all three heats. MISS GREAT LAKES II again finished second, despite conking out in Heat Three.

Quality was clearly lacking in the Mid-West Unlimited contingent with MISS PEPSI the only "star" in the group. The Detroit teams most assuredly had a problem with regard to their upcoming Gold Cup challenge in Seattle. This point was underscored when Stan Sayres, on July 7, 1952, raised his own mile straightaway record with SLO-MO-SHUN IV from 160.323 to

178.497. (This was an average of one run with the wind at 185.627 and another against it at 171.428.)

Only six Unlimiteds attended the 45th running of the Gold Cup on August 9, 1952. Chuck Thompson and MISS PEPSI again topped the qualifying list with another record-breaking 9-mile average of 103.746. Lou Fageol and SLO-MO-SHUN V checked in second fastest at 102.564, followed by Stan Dollar and SLO-MO-SHUN IV at 93.024.

SLO-MO-SHUN IV, which lost a propeller, and MISS GREAT LAKES II were early casualties in Heat One, which featured a duel of unprecedented speed between MISS PEPSI and SLO-MO-SHUN V. Never before had two boats averaged over 100 miles per hour for five competitive laps on a 3-mile course. As Fageol crossed the line to start his sixth lap of ten, the Allison engine block overheated and cracked, forcing the defending Gold Cup champion out of the race.

This left Chuck Thompson to go on to register the first 100 plus heat time in Gold Cup history: 101.024 miles per hour. Far behind MISS PEPSI came Morlan Visel in HURRICANE IV at 86.318 and Bill Cantrell in SUCH CRUST IV at 85.371.

Although all hope for retaining the Gold Cup in Seattle for another year seemed lost, the Sayres team concentrated all of their efforts into reviving SLO-MO-SHUN IV and sent Stan Dollar out for Heat Two equipped with SLO-MO-SHUN V's propeller.

Dollar and Thompson dueled closely throughout the first lap with neither driver holding an advantage, until MISS PEPSI blew her gear box and was finished for the remainder of the race. This left SLO-MO-SHUN IV to finish the 30 miles all alone at a leisurely 75.491.

Only two boats remained to start Heat Three: SLO-MO-SHUN IV with 400 points and HURRICANE IV with 300. The partisan Seattle crowd cheered with the news that MISS PEPSI would not appear in the last heat. The announcement was tempered, however, with the admonition that, should neither SLO-MO nor HURRICANE score points, MISS PEPSI, with 400 markers, would win the Gold Cup on the basis of having turned the fastest heat of the contest.

For three laps, SLO-MO-SHUN IV maintained a slight lead over HURRICANE IV, which then dropped out with a twisted propeller shaft. For the seven remaining laps, SLO-MO minced around the 3-mile oval before a silent spectator throng, which applauded enthusiastically when SLO-MO-SHUN IV received the checkered flag for a 30-mile average of 84.356. Seattle would host the Gold Cup again in 1953. And once again, the Detroit delegation went home empty handed.

MISS PEPSI's blown gear box not only cost the Dossin brothers the Gold Cup, it prevented them from defending their title in the Silver Cup three weeks later. A replacement gear box could not be constructed in time.

Chuck Thompson agreed to pilot the twin-Allison-powered SUCH CRUST III at the 1952 Silver Cup in MISS PEPSI's absence but reached an impasse with Jack Schafer on race day morning and beached himself for the day.

With MISS PEPSI returning to the fold at the President's Cup, Thompson, for the third year in a row, won all three heats of a race that saw five boats start and four boats finish all 45 miles. Taggart in MISS GREAT LAKES II finished second, followed by Foster in GALE II, and Jack Bartlow in HORNET CRUST. MISS PEPSI averaged 84.506 for the overall race, compared to 83.277 for MISS GREAT LAKES II.

Jubilation turned to gloom for the Dossin brothers and Chuck Thompson a week after the President's Cup when the New Martinsville curse struck again for the fourth frustrating year. This time, MISS PEPSI threw a propeller coupling less than a mile after the start and was out for the remainder of the contest.

After six years, three National Championships, and eleven major race wins, Walter and Roy Dossin were the winningest Unlimited team up until that time. They decided to rest on their laurels and withdrew MISS PEPSI from competition.

Chuck Thompson drove Schafer's SUCH CRUST III in 1953 and built his own SHORT CIRCUIT in 1954.

The Detroit Unlimited fleet, now bereft of MISS PEPSI, went down to defeat twice more in the Gold Cup series at Seattle. SLO-MO- SHUN IV won in 1953 and SLO-MO-SHUN V triumphed in 1954. This made Stan Sayres the first five-time consecutive winning owner of that famous cup.

Detroit's GALE V finally broke up Seattle's monopoly of the Gold Cup in 1955. Driver Lee Schoenith won the race on points without winning a single heat. Detroiter Bill Muncey, driving the Seattle-based MISS THRIFTWAY, had won two heats out of three at the 1955 Gold Cup, but lost the race to Schoenith who received 400 Bonus Points for running the 90 miles 4.536 seconds faster than Muncey.

The Gold Cup would be run in Detroit in 1956. Seattleites made it clear they would go all out to win it back for 1957. Detroiters knew they faced a serious challenge in 1956.

The 1955 Silver Cup was seen as a warm-up for the 1956 Gold Cup. It behooved the Detroit Unlimited fleet to have its act together.

This was sufficient incentive for Walter and Roy Dossin to pull MISS PEPSI out of mothballs and enter her in the Silver Cup and President's Cup races in late-season 1955. Chuck Thompson returned as driver. (Thompson simultaneously beached his self- owned SHORT CIRCUIT for the remainder of the season.)

MISS PEPSI had been inactive for three years. Times had changed. The smaller, lighter, single-engine three-point hulls were all the rage. Step hydroplanes were viewed as obsolete. The only team besides the Dossins still running step boats in 1955 was Horace Dodge.

Several teams were still trying to make the twin-Allison concept work. These included SUCH CRUST III, GALE VI, and MISS WAYNE. The idea was to combine the power of MISS PEPSI with the hull design of SLO-MO-SHUN IV. But these were big heavy boats and were only sporadically competitive with their single-engine counterparts.

In her first heat of competition since 1952, MISS PEPSI impressed favorably in Silver Cup Heat 1-C with a reading of 96.328, the fastest of the race.

Luck of the draw matched MISS PEPSI with TEMPO VII, piloted by Danny Foster, in Heat 2-A. Thompson and Foster dueled spectacularly and on equal terms until TEMPO VII, occupying the inside lane, moved away for the victory with MISS PEPSI in second.

An expected down-to-the-wire rematch between TEMPO VII and MISS PEPSI didn't materialize when the Dossin brothers' entry slowed down to an unfamiliar fourth place in the Final Heat to place an overall third behind Foster in TEMPO VII and Bill Cantrell in GALE V.

The 1955 Silver Cup demonstrated that, while MISS PEPSI may not have been quite the contender she had been in 1952, she was still competitive enough to pose a solid threat. She demonstrated more speed than DORA MY SWEETIE, the only other step boat in the race, which finished an overall fourth with rookie Don Wilson driving.

Three weeks later, at the President's Cup, MISS PEPSI won both of her elimination heats quite convincingly and led the field over the finish line in the Final Heat only to be disqualified for jumping the gun and dropped to an overall fourth-place on points.

MISS PEPSI also participated in the two-heat Rogers Memorial race, run in conjunction with the President's Cup, and finished second in both outings to MISS U.S. and driver Jack Bartlow.

A month following the 1955 President's Cup Regatta, MISS PEPSI co-owner Walter Dossin passed away. As the 1956 season approached, surviving Dossin brother Roy was non-committal about the status of MISS PEPSI. In the interim, Chuck Thompson reactivated his SHORT CIRCUIT for participation in several early- in-the-season races.

MISS PEPSI's entry in the 1956 Gold Cup turned out to be a last- minute decision. By this time, Ernie Dossin (father of Ernie Dossin III) was essentially running the team on a day-to-day basis.

According to Ernie III, "It was Chuck Thompson that came to my Dad with the plea to enter the boat in the race. He said that it appeared that the Seattle boats would be capable of running over the Detroit fleet and that although our boat had not seen action for quite a while, it was still the only Detroit boat that appeared capable of giving the invading fleet a race.

"The boat was sent up to Les Staudacher's shop to be gone over to determine the race ability of the hull. Les said the boat needed some hull adjustments and although he gave the hull 'first aid,' he could not really do all that needed doing. Chuck, Dad and a couple of others worked on several of the available engines night and day.

"This was all done within a three-week period. As all of us know, it is hard to tune a boat in this short period of time, especially in those days of cranky Allison engines and a wooden boat that had been out of the water for nearly a year. In spite of that problem, they went forward, knowing that there was only an outside chance of coming off the winner."

The 1956 Gold Cup was run on September 1 of that year. Five Detroit boats had journeyed to Seattle the previous month for the Seafair Regatta and eight West Coast challengers returned the compliment, thereby increasing to eighteen the entry list for one of the more controversial chapters in power boat history.

MISS THRIFTWAY and Bill Muncey were eventually declared the winners and the race went back to Seattle for 1957.

Muncey was erroneously disqualified for hitting a buoy in Heat Three of the 1956 Gold Cup, until TV film of the event proved that this didn't happen. (The buoy was still visible in the spray after MISS THRIFTWAY had passed it. Then, on the following lap, the buoy was no longer upright.)

Thompson and the recently reactivated MISS PEPSI decisively beat Muncey and MISS THRIFTWAY in Heat 1-A. Muncey then rebounded to defeat Thompson in Heat 2-A and the Final Heat.

MISS PEPSI won the Bonus Points for the fastest race (96.601), but MISS THRIFTWAY won the Bonus Points for the fastest heat (100.906 in the Final).

MISS THRIFTWAY also posted the fastest lap of the race at 104.846 on the 3-mile course.

MISS PEPSI's fastest heat was 99.343 (in the Final).

Thompson and the Dossin family took heated exception to the rescinding of MISS THRIFTWAY's disqualification and filed an official protest.

A special APBA fact-finding committee was formed to investigate the matter. The committee included Gold Cup Technical Chairman Mel Crook and APBA Chief Counsel William Smith. They studied the film and spent hours listening to testimony from all concerned.

In the committee's opinion, it was the wash from the MISS THRIFTWAY that destroyed the marker in question. The boat itself never touched it, although it's possible that the THRIFTWAY ran over debris from the buoy's remains on subsequent laps. This would explain the presence of rubbed-on paint and gouges found on the boat after the Final Heat.

According to APBA rules, when a buoy is dislodged or destroyed, it ceases to be a marker and may be disregarded.

The committee also decided that MISS PEPSI ran over the wreckage of the same buoy but did so blameless.

The APBA Inboard Racing Commission unanimously endorsed the committee's findings and ruled that physical contact was necessary to establish a foul. The Commission concurred with Crook and Smith that MISS THRIFTWAY had won fair and square and that MISS PEPSI had finished second.

According to Crook, "To disqualify a boat for damaging a marker that it had not touched on account of horrendous spray would obviously result in utter chaotic injustice."

Buoys had been a problem earlier in the day at the 1956 Gold Cup. An early morning rain squall damaged and moved around several buoys. And during Heat 1-B, several course markers became unfastened and starting floating around out of place.

But while Crook and Smith convinced the APBA hierarchy that no foul had occurred, they could not convince the MISS PEPSI team. To this day, a half-century later, members of the Dossin family still insist that victory in the 1956 Gold Cup should have been theirs. They regard as suspicious the report that the MISS THRIFTWAY crew was--for a time--reluctant to allow observers to inspect the paint marks on the side of their boat after the Final Heat.

MISS PEPSI and the Dossin family closed out their illustrious careers with a second-place behind MISS THRIFTWAY at the 1956 President's Cup. Muncey and THRIFTWAY had heat finishes of first, first, and second, while Thompson and PEPSI ran third, second, and first.

In her final race, MISS PEPSI posted the fastest 3-heat/45-mile average of the President's Cup at 97.239 miles per hour.

And for those who like stories salted with neat remembrances, the "Mahogany Cigar" went out a winner with a first-place finish in the last heat she ever ran.

Ten years had come and gone since the Dossins made their Unlimited debut on the Potomac River at the 1946 President's Cup. They now bowed out of competition on the very same body of water.

MISS PEPSI didn't race in 1957. If she had, she would have been no match for Jack Regas and HAWAII KAI III, which rewrote the record book from coast to coast and did a lap of 116 miles per hour on Lake Chelan. As a competitive concept, the step hydroplane was a dead issue after 1956.

Roy Dossin, the last surviving Dossin brother, passed away in 1964.

As reported by Ernie Dossin III, "After Walter died, Roy received a query about an interest in buying HAWAII KAI, but the spirit was gone. My Dad was grateful to have his summers back. Roy was not in the best health and he was caring for his wife who had Alzheimer's disease.

"While all good things must come to an end, I believe that all in the family would say, `It was fun while it lasted.'"

Long absent from the competitive arena, MISS PEPSI still inspires awe. The greatest of all step hydroplanes reigns as the star attraction at the Dossin Great Lakes Museum on Belle Isle in Detroit.

THE 100TH RUNNING OF THE GOLD CUP - JULY 11-13, 2008

It's time to make your plans for the historic 100th running of the Gold Cup, July 11-13 2008!

- Brian Reed - DRRRA Volunteer