



Letter From the Editor

by Bob Silva

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The CSA Newsletter is back! It will now be published quarterly.

I miss my friend and contributor, the late Bill Walti. Bill was involved with race boats since the early 1950s, and had a wealth of knowledge that he gladly shared. He covered race boat construction tips and stories about past CSA record-holding boats, their drivers and owners. Ever the instigator, Bill was also the sparkplug in fashioning those beautiful tack-pins modeled after CSA Vintage race boats. This issue of the CSA newsletter is dedicated to Bill Walti.

Welcome aboard to our new CSA members! This issue will be different from past newsletters, as it will only cover the Buckingham Test & Tune Vintage Boat and Car Show, held May 19 - 21 at Clear Lake, CA. There is a "Cheat Sheet" at the end of the newsletter to help decipher the hydroplane class designation letters (i.e. "Y" = 48 cubic inch class). If you prefer to not receive future CSA newsletters, just send me a quick email saying, "No thanks" and I'll remove you from our newsletter mailing list. Okay, here we go! Don't forget to connect your kill switch lanyard...

Buckingham Test & Tune 2023

Bright blue skies and calm waters greeted attendees at beautiful Clear Lake for CSA's 4th Annual Buckingham Test & Tune on May 19th. Festivities began Friday evening in Kelseyville (population 3,700) at the Allan and Donna Thomas Showroom. An array of shiny hot rods, striking classic cars and racy sports cars greeted people outside the showroom. Inside, visitors enjoyed the eye candy - a wealth of beautiful vintage cars and boats and eclectic

memorabilia while savoring the wine and cheese offerings. Vintage car participants then fired up their rides and paraded down Main Street to the CSA "Meet and Greet." It was held at Lady Luck Garage and Showroom, where the guests dined on pizza, salad and wine while Dennis Purcell provided acoustic entertainment. The showroom's mix of street rods, classic cars and assortment of collectibles represented the blending of the hot rodding and boat racing cultures well. There is a long-standing kinship between the two that dates back over 80 years. We'll be exploring that relationship in future newsletters.



A can't-miss stop in Kelseyville, Lady Luck Garage sports an eye-catching mural.

Saturday morning at the Buckingham Golf and Country Club, entrants gathered up their goodie bags and, with coffee and pastries in hand, eagerly settled in for the driver's meeting. CSA Commodore Scott Courts and Race Director John Walti warmly welcomed everyone and reviewed the course layout and flag rules. Veteran Crackerbox driver Julian Rucki offered sage safety advice about closed course flybys. It suddenly felt like the good old days with everyone heading to the pit area to prepare their boats to go on the water. It had all the anticipation of the first heat of the day.

Then the throaty roar of a Chrysler-Hemi V-8 contrasting with the howl from a 24-cylinder Duesenberg turned the heads of the Buckingham crowd and drew spectators to the water's edge. It was Danny Foster in the 1929 Nunes Brothers Gold Cup gentlemen's runabout, *MAYBE NOT II*, creating the roar and Dan Arena behind the wheel of the howling 1940 step-hydroplane, *NOTRE DAME*, G-5. They were the first boats to be cutting flyby laps together. What a sight! What a sound! The low, sleek *NOTRE DAME* with her striking machine-turned aluminum dashboard took home "Best of Show" award.



Note the rare, oversized tachometer on the NOTRE DAME's dashboard. It runs counterclockwise.

CSA member Mike Johnson ignited a revival of the Pacific One Design Hydroplane (PODH) class when he built his *PEGASUS*, O-53, along with two other PODHs, in his Walnut Creek shop. From 1936 to the mid-50s, the PODHs were popular with racers and spectators alike. The American Power Boat Association (APBA) required exact adherence to their PODH building plans and only stock V8-60 Ford Flatheads were allowed to power the 13-foot hull. The emphasis was on keen competition, showcasing the driver's talent. Coupled with their wild, galloping 60-mph ride, the PODH step-hydros were a compelling force in recruiting members. Mike's *PEGASUS*, planked in rich mahogany casting a mirror-like sheen, and Bob Price in his *LIL SOMETHIN'*, O-55, treated the crowd to some old-time PODH action. Bob,

despite never having raced a boat, drove with the appearance of an old pro. Racing quarter midgets at age eight may have had something to do with that.

Crackerboxes! There are no lines at the snack bar when they're racing. They are the only racing runabouts requiring a riding mechanic. Crackerboxes are commonly called "Crackers" - a name that may denote the mental state of the rider. The high-flying, prop-walking Crackerboxes have been extremely popular since the class was established in 1947. Kelseyville's Rolf Kriken brought his two Crackers. Built by Mel Larson, the *IMPOSTER/SO SLOW* is powered by a Buick OHV straight-six. It is a perfect example of what the runabouts looked like in '47, when their top speed was 54 mph. Rolf took flybys in his other Crackerbox, the newer designed *BUCKET LIST*, featuring Chevy V8 power and a smoother ride. He was joined by Mike Phillips in *NO SENSE*, 65-P. Designed in 1957 by California's legendary race boat builder Fred Wickens, the 65-P set a class flying-kilometer record of 96 mph in 1968. The bright yellow 260 ci Ford-powered *NO SENSE*, with her racy stance, won "Best Crackerbox" award.



Mike Phillips ran flybys solo in the Cracker NO SENSE. During races, the second seat holds a riding mechanic.

Clear Lake, Lake Berryessa and Salton Sea hosted Marathon boat races during the 1960s and 70s. At 100 to 500 miles long, the races were a test of durability for driver, engine and hull. The 2023 Test & Tune included two Marathon racing beauties. Gene Dangle's *BETTER IDEA!*, K9M featured a beautiful a wood deck accentuating her blue and yellow

paint scheme. She was built by Rayson-Craft (founded by Rudy Ramos and Ed Olson = Rayson) for Rudy to drive in the 250 mile Miami Orange Bowl Classic in 1969. Local Buckingham resident Jack McManus brought his low profile 21-foot Marathon racer OL' SCHOOL. Built at Aqua Craft Boat Works when the shop was based in Clear Lake in the late-1960s, OL' SCHOOL is one of only four Aqua Craft built with a wood deck instead of fiberglass during that period. As a youngster in 1953, McManus took a fast and thrilling boat ride with CSA member Ed DeGear in VIXEN, a racing Crackerbox. Forever hooked on speed across the water, McManus became a nationally ranked top-5 Marathon water skier in 1963. BETTER IDEA! K9M, with a highly polished supercharger atop her impressive Chevy V-8, won the "Best Runabout" trophy. And the crowd loved OL' SCHOOL, garnering her the "People's Choice" award.



Gene Dangel's BETTER IDEA! shows off a polished supercharger atop her big block Chevy.



Crowd favorite Aqua Craft, OL' SCHOOL, shown in the turn with the hydro AMERICAN THUNDER.

Buckingham provided a lovely tree-shaded lawn area for the beautiful, high-powered runabouts, screaming outboards and various inboard racing hydroplanes exhibited in static display. John Walti showed his 48 ci class hydro, HANG IN THERE, Y-55, that he and his father, the late Bill Walti restored. Bill was a boat racer, designer and builder and a CSA driving force for many years. The DeSilva hydro uses a modified 4-cylinder Crosley. During the 1950s and 60s, the small, lightweight Crosleys propelled the little 10-foot hulls to 80-mph speeds. Also on static display was the boat with the most unusual look of all the entries. It was CSA member Steve Wilkie's Unlimited hydro SHANTY II, U-29, possibly the most expensive hydroplane ever built. The magnesium keel alone cost \$14,000 in 1958. Built for Texas oilman William T. Waggoner, the 32-foot aluminum hull saw less than 6 hours of testing and then disappeared from the racing scene for nearly 60 years. In the next newsletter we'll cover the intriguing history of SHANTY II.



Find out more in the next CSA Newsletter.

Henry Lauterbach began designing and building conventional inboard racing hydroplanes (cockpit behind the engine) in 1950, with his son Larry working at his side. Henry Lauterbach built 200 boats before his death in 2006. Today, Larry is busy in his Maryland shop restoring vintage hulls and constructing new 22-foot, 100 plus mph, two-seater (“TS”) hydros and he just finished his eighth. They’re based on Grand Prix (GP) boats that he and his father built, but they have the addition of a neutral/reverse transmission. They’re perfect for taking a friend out on a Sunday afternoon spin. Sparky Bullock had Anthony Caccia riding with him during flybys in his TS. The beautiful birch-decked AMERICAN THUNDER runs a supercharged Chevy for power.



Sparky Bullock leaving the dock to take Anthony Caccia on an exciting flyby ride.

Due to their high-quality construction, Lauterbachs are greatly sought after by vintage race boat collectors. John Lawrence brought his Larry Lauterbach conventional, THRILL ME, E-247 to Buckingham. Built in 1972, the 280 ci class, 17’6” hydro runs a 273 ci Plymouth. Mike Johnson and Dan Arena shared driving duties in the handsome THRILL ME during flyby heats.

Spectators got a chance to see the various hydroplane bottom designs as they were launched with a lift crane. Although common throughout the rest of the nation, it’s a rarity in California. In the past boats were either beach or ramp launched except for regional and national championships.



Spectators were afforded a rare chance to view the hydros from below as they were lifted into the water via crane.

Duane and Pat Yarno traveled over 700 miles from Washington State with their 225 class TIGER, N-72 in tow. The well-known Lauterbach sat in static display, awaiting a prop-shaft replacement. In 1974, her modified aluminum 215 ci Buick V-8 propelled TIGER to set a flying-kilo record of 134 mph. Imagine sustaining that speed in a 17’ 8” hull! The birch-decked TIGER, with a list of regional and national titles lettered on her reddish/copper cowlings, has the classic 1970’s conventional look. She won “Best Classic Hydro” this year.



Duane Yarno holds a flag from Miami Marine Stadium, where TIGER captured many of her wins.

The raceboat community was stunned in 1950, when Seattle’s Unlimited class hydroplane SLO-MOSHUN IV, U-27 smashed the World’s Water Speed Record at 160 mph. The Ted Jones-designed U-27

then ventured to Detroit, MI, where she lapped the field and won the American Power Boat Association (APBA) Gold Cup Trophy. It was the first time a West Coast boat won the prestigious award. Seattle had no professional sport teams at that time and a fervor for boat racing began. Hundreds of thousands of devoted fans would jam the shores of Lake Washington to watch the big hydros race. The Seattle area was known as Hydroplane Country. Several Seattle-based race boat designers have followed in Ted Jones' footsteps designing record-setting hulls of their own. At Buckingham, three Seattle designers were featured, including Ted's son, Ron, who developed the cabover design (cockpit in front of engine). Sparky Bullock was behind the wheel of his Ron Jones cabover RADICAL, E-12, a beautifully restored black, silver and red 5 Litre. She has an off-set cockpit, that allows more weight on the portside of the hull to benefit making left turns. The hydro was formerly campaigned on the East Coast as LIQUID DREAM, E-40. Darrel Robinson is certainly no stranger to racing hydroplanes. In 1973, at age 19, he captured Southern California Speedboat Club's (SCSC) 145 class High Point Trophy, piloting his cabover BLUE STREAK, S-27. Darrel and his wife Sally brought their Jones cabover, CHUCK WAGON, E-22. A 273 Plymouth powered the E-22 to 280 class National Championship in 1971 with her first owner, Chuck Thompson, a top East Coast driver, at the wheel. For the purist, the maroon and birch CHUCK WAGON is true to the look of an early 70's Jones picklefork hull. She took home the "Best Hydro" award.



Darrel Robinson in CHUCK WAGON, as she kicks up spray from the skid fin.

Before his passing in 2020, Seattle's Don Kelson estimated that he built about 90 inboard hydroplanes since 1957. His cabover hulls won championships and set records in everything from the smallest 48 ci class to the large 7 Liters. Kelson was honored as APBA's "Boat Builder of 2009" and he celebrated by taking some flyby laps in JB & WATER, E-66, a boat of his design and build, at a Wheeling, WV vintage regatta. That same 1978 5 Litre ran flybys at Buckingham with owner Gordy Cole at the controls. Another Seattle entry was Steve Aird's SHADY LADY, F-55. Veteran racer Bud Burns, who built the 6 Litre from Kelson plans, campaigned her from 1976 until retiring from racing in the mid-1990s. The hydro then languished in storage for years, until Aird discovered her in 2019. He had the famed hydro restored to her glory days during a 3-year restoration. The SHADY LADY was the fastest boat at Test & Tune. With a 400-inch Chevy, she's capable of 150 mph.

Seattle's Ed Karelsen's Limited class cabovers are easily identified by their long sleek cowlings with elongated headrests. There were four Karelsen entries at Buckingham. Sparky Bullock's striking red and white 225, THE SPECIALIST, N-75, was driven by CSA Commodore Scott Courts. CSA's Secretary/Treasurer John Walti pushed the throttle of Sparky's other Karelsen, HOT TO TROT, E-50. The low-slung 5 Litre is the 1989 National Champion.



John Walti took time out from his Race Director duties to drive Sparky Bullock's 5 Litre HOT TO TROT.

Ed Clintworth and Ivy Bolm towed the blue and silver beauty, MADAME BLUE, A-102, down from the Northwest. The legendary 2.5 Litre modified hydro with a highly modified, 4 cylinder Chevy II, won National Championships in 1976 and 1979, when raced as Don Mashburn's record holder MR. BUD. Sold to Dick Neeson and renamed MADAME BLUE, the exceptional-handling Karelsen continued to break competition records. Ed Clintworth then purchased the E-102, installed a 327 Chevy V8, and now runs her in vintage flybys. Doug Woodward towed a 1978 Karelsen 280 hydro down from Washington State. Doug and his brother John purchased the boat in 1986 as the DUNCAN ENGINE SPECIAL. Renamed COUNTRY STOVES, E-76, they drove her in 280 class races for two years. The cabover was then completely restored for running vintage flybys. The hydro's black on orange paint scheme is eye-catching, not just when flying on water, but also when flying down the highway on her tilt trailer.

With the conclusion of Saturday's flybys, a tired but happy group of participants made their way to HYDRO-THERAPY'S margarita bar, where folks relaxed and quenched their thirst. About One-hundred and twenty-five guests gathered in the CSA big tent and dined on a fantastic barbeque meal prepared by CSA's Mike Carillo. Auctioneer Allan Thomas soon had the crowd laughing as he encouraged lively bidding on a wide range of race boat and automotive fare. Buckingham Test & Tune trophies were then awarded by Sparky Bullock and Scott Courts. In addition to those trophies, Rich Scogin was then presented with the Bill Walti Award to a standing ovation. The award honors the CSA member who has done the most for the club during the year. Rich spent countless hours recruiting volunteers, securing sponsors and organizing the event. He did a stellar job.



(L to R) Steve Aird, owner of SHADY LADY; Scott Courts, CSA Commodore; Rich Scogin, recipient of the Bill Walti Award.

An eager group of vintage speedboaters returned Sunday for more flybys and sharing stories of the previous day's fun. Some of us were transported back to the golden days of inboard racing in the 1970s. Maybe it was the sight of hydroplanes slowly rising up off their trailers and descending to rest on the water with the help of a lift crane. Or the sound of their engines firing up as they left the dock and labored to get the hull up on plane. Spectators felt it too, cheering enthusiastically as the boats returned to the pits after their flyby heats. Big smiles all around showed that the Buckingham event was considered successful and FUN! Combining vintage boats with the classic and vintage car shows at Kelseyville and Buckingham certainly helped raise that fun factor. Hard-working volunteers, generous sponsors, and community support not only made the Buckingham Test & Tune possible, but everyone worked hard together to make it a great success.

It promises to be even bigger and better next year, so be sure to mark your calendar for May 17 - 19, 2024.

Until then, you can watch some great Buckingham Test & Tune action thanks to Dave Nolan's great drone shots and video footage. Go to youtube and search Buckingham Boats.

American Power Boat Association Letter Designations

The APBA uses letters to designate engine size limits. The size limits for several letters have evolved over the years due to scarcity of some engines after they were no longer produced.

Stock Engines

T = 1.5 litre: 97 ci Toyota

S = 136 ci: V8-60 Ford; next **145 ci:** 6 cyl. Ford Falcon; next **2.5 litre:** 4 cyl. 2300 cc Ford

E = 280 ci: 265 Chevy or 273 Plymouth V8; next **5 litre:** 305 Chevy V8

J = 7 litre II: - 427 Chevy or Ford V8

Modified Engines

Y = 48 ci: Crosley; next **850 cc** Fiat; next **1 litre:** 1160 cc 2 cycle jet ski or 1315 cc 4 cycle

A = 135 ci: V8-60 Ford; next **150 ci:** 6 cyl Ford Falcon or 4 cyl Chev II; next **2.5 litre:** 167 ci any make

N = 225 ci: 221 ci V8-85 Ford or 215 ci Buick V8 or 215 ci Olds V8 or 221 ci Ford V8

F = 266 ci: 255 ci Mercury or 265 ci Corvette; **5 litre:** 305 ci Chevy or Ford V8; **6 litre:** 360 ci Chevy or Ford V8

H = 7 litre: Supercharged 427 ci Chevy, Ford, Chrysler

GP = Grand Prix: Supercharged 468 ci Chevy, Ford, Chrysler

TS = Two Seater: *not an official APBA class – no engine restrictions

G = Gold Cup: 625 ci Fageol or 732 ci Hispano Suiza (Hisso)

U = Unlimited: Allison V12 or Rolls Merlin V12