

An Interview with Jack Leek

By Craig Fjarlie



An interview in four parts as published in the Seattle Outboard Association newsletter, Pit Previews.



Participants celebrate Hugh Entrop's 107.821 world outboard speed record set June 7th, 1958 on Lake Washington, Seattle, WA. From left to right: Jack Leek, Ted Jones, Charlie Strang, Carl Kiekhafer and Hugh Entrop.

Photos:

Page 5 Jack Leek raising the A-Hydro Mark to 61.069 mph in 1954, an increase of over 7 mph.

Page 7 A Pre-kevlar and muscular Burt Ross in competition photograph by Bob Carver.

Page 10 Looking down at Hugh Entrop in RX-3. Note the blanked R-22 APBA racing number.

Page 13 Burt Ross pushes R17-X to a new speed record of 115.347 mph.

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An Interview with Jack Leek

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Jack Leek ranks among the most significant men in boat racing; for his own accomplishments as well as his role in Outboard Marine Corporation's racing program.

Leek was born in Tacoma, where he was introduced to outboard racing shortly before World War II.

Following service in the Navy, he returned to the Northwest where he studied engineering at Gonzaga University in Spokane.

Racing became his passion, however, and before long he was back in Tacoma, making a name for himself on the race course and working at Narrows Marine.

Craig Fjarlie met with Leek at his home on Horseshoe Bay west of Gig Harbor. In the following interview, Leek recounts his years in racing, from humble beginnings to managing a professional team.

WHAT WAS YOUR FIRST ENCOUNTER WITH BOATS?

My dad had a little six horse and we did a lot of fishing. It wasn't until high school days I got acquainted with outboard racing. I can't really say I raced then. I certainly was introduced to it by a couple of fellows. I think I took a ride in a C Service Runabout and another ride one day in a Midget Hydro. That gave me the bug.

YOU HAVE AN ENGINEERING DEGREE FROM GONZAGA?

No, I don't. To be honest with you, I don't have the degree. I cut my senior year. I had been working with the Mercury distributor, True's Distributing Company, in Spokane. They distributed Mercury

outboard and Higgins boats in eastern Washington, northern Idaho, and western Montana. While trying to carry quite a few credits in college I still had time to work full-time there.

I ran their service department. Those years, in the late '40s and early '50s, the leisure boating business was just growing like a skyrocket. You couldn't do anything wrong. People had been shut up from the war and had not had recreation. Carl Kiekhaefer made darn sure that all of his dealers got involved in some way in racing. That's really one of the ways that Stock racing got going.

TO BACK UP A LITTLE, YOU RACED A BIT BEFORE THE WAR.

One or two races. Just playing around with it.

WHO INTRODUCED YOU TO IT? HOW DID YOU FIND OUT ABOUT IT?

I went to a race in Seattle and I think I met Len Keller, although I'm not sure he remembered it. I was just a kid standing around. I was fascinated with it, actually. It was a little regatta on the north end of Lake Washington. It wasn't Kenmore.

THEY USED TO RACE AT JUANITA.

Maybe that was it.

THAT'S WHERE BILL RANKIN GOT INVOLVED. HE WENT TO A RACE THERE IN ABOUT 1941.

Yeah. Johnny Sheriff was a real good driver and a good mechanic here in Tacoma. He had a C Racing Runabout. I'm not sure what all he had; he may've had Service, too. I think I went to this

race to see him run. I met a few people, including Keller, and that's where I got a ride in the Midget. Can't remember his name...had a couple of Midgets and I think he also had a C that he raced himself. He gave me a ride in his Midget. Anyway, put all this together and you got a young kid that's kinda hooked. I ran a couple of heats one day. You can't really say you're racing doing that. You're learning.

It wasn't until after the war that I really got racing. Started the Spokane Outboard Club - Harry Woods, myself, and Paul True. That was a nice little club. We were primarily involved with the Stock program; Mercurys. Obviously, we were selling 'em.

THIS WAS AN APBA CLUB?

No, it wasn't. We kinda started on our own over there.

WHEN YOU STARTED RACING IN SPOKANE AFTER THE WAR, HOW DID YOU GET YOUR EQUIPMENT?

As a matter of fact, I can't really call it my own equipment to start with. It belonged to the store, to Paul True. Paul had raced back in the '30s. He liked it, so when I took an interest in it he helped me. There was a particular type of boat. Chuck Hickling was building them in Seattle and I knew Chuck slightly. We bought a bunch of 'em, B Runabouts.

THEY WERE HICKLING'S OWN BRAND?

Oh, yeah. He designed it and was building 'em in his garage. I was buying 'em over there and selling 'em. We were sticking 10 horse Mercurys on 'em. That was the B class.

CHUCK WAS BUILDING RUNABOUTS?

Yeah. And the hydros we'd pick up from alky drivers, wherever we could find one, you know, whether it be a Jacoby or a Neal. Most of 'em were conventionals [step hydros - Ed.] to start with. There were a couple of Neal three-points.

But about this time Joe Swift started building what I called orange crates, the Swift hydros. They turned out real good, they were a nice little hydro.

THEY WERE THREE POINT?

Yeah.

HOW WOULD YOU COMPARE DRIVING A CONVENTIONAL (STEP) HYDRO WITH A THREE-POINTER? WERE THE CONVENTIONALS TRICKY TO DRIVE?

Not really, not when you knew what they were and what they were supposed to do. Between a conventional step hydro and a three-point, it's two different techniques altogether. The conventional hydro, you turned on the outside chine and you used 'em primarily for rough water and short courses. In fact, there was a time when I carried both the three-point and conventional on the trailer, just in case we ran into real rough water, which we did a few times. But it eventually turned out that the three-points were so much faster that you just ignored the conventional.

But a conventional, when you get to the corner, at the same time you turn the wheel, you plant your knee on the outside over against the floor so that you're distributing your weight on the outside. The hull actually rocks up a little on its outboard chine and you just go right around the corner like you're on a rail. Beautiful.

WHAT KIND OF FIN WOULD YOU USE ON THE CONVENTIONAL?

Well, in those days you had a little skid fin right in the center, right behind the step.

HOW DIFFERENT WAS A RUNABOUT FROM A CONVENTIONAL?

Oh, quite a bit. A conventional hydro, you don't have to shift your weight forward or aft. You know by testing your set-ups and so on where you want your weight in the boat. It's not that



touchy. You're not trying to fly it. You want that front step pad touching the water once in-a-while.

On a three-point, you're trying to fly it and keep it off the water. It's a delicate balance whether you're going over backwards or whether you're gonna stay rightside up, you know. Well, you learn that pretty quick.

A runabout, you try to keep your weight right in the back end. In fact, I knew some guys that used to crouch. When they were crouched they would cross their legs and put their feet right at the transom and literally, down the straightaway, be standing on their feet so that's where the weight was distributed. It wasn't legal. You were supposed to have a little better grasp of the boat. But, you wanted your weight back in order to get the bow up and keep it free. If you kick the engine out you can do the same thing, except you're losing speed. So, your weight distribution would make the boat free and I don't think that's changed through the years.

HOW DID IT HAPPEN THAT YOU CAME BACK TO TACOMA?

In 1950 I was married and had a son, and decided there was more money dropped accidentally in the retail marine business in the Seattle-Tacoma area than there was spent on purpose in Spokane. So I moved back to Tacoma, to Narrows Marine, and started selling Mercurys again over here.

THE MARINA WAS ALREADY IN EXISTENCE, YOU JUST TOOK A JOB THERE?

Right. They were kind of running it as a hobby. There were two brothers who owned it. One was a city commissioner and he kinda stuck his nose in once in-a-while and handled the business end, the accounting. The other was a little more hands-on. He worked for Ma Bell, but he'd be out there every afternoon and evening and all weekend and pretty much was the mover behind boats, engines, and fishing gear and getting the marina going. I fit in, in the respect that I opened up the service shop and got some engines in there.

I think when I got there, there were three five-horse Mercurys. I think I asked him, "Why don't you get some 10-horses in here and make some money?" And he says, "I don't think we can sell 'em." It was about that time that Doc Jones had moved up from California and taken over the Mercury distributorship in Seattle. I went to him and swapped these five-horses for a couple of 10s and a bunch of parts and we literally got going in the dealership that way.

It worked into a pretty nice little dealership over the years. In the mean time, we were racing and the Stock program was growing in Seattle. I think I ended up having an A Stock Runabout, an A Stock Hydro, a B Stock Runabout, a B Stock Hydro, and a D Hydro.

YOU DID MOST OF YOUR OWN MECHANICAL WORK?

Oh yeah, all of it.

WERE YOU SELF-TAUGHT OR DID YOU HAVE A MENTOR?

I learned myself, by trial and error. Bill Rankin taught me a lot of tips about engines. I guess everybody you come in contact with could offer something. I think most of it is set-up and props. You can have the best engine in the world, if you've got a bad prop you aren't going anywhere.

WHO DID YOUR PROP WORK IN THOSE DAYS?

I didn't do any prop work myself. Most of the props I was runnin' came from right out of the box, Mercury. Or O.J. Johnsons out of Oakland were pretty good at that time.

O.J. JOHNSON IS NOT A NAME I'M FAMILIAR WITH.

Aren't you? They were bronze props and pretty thin. Different kind of shape than most of 'em, although his shape now is pretty conventional. A lot of people copied it because it worked.

IT WAS ABOUT THIS TIME, WHILE YOU WERE AT NARROWS MARINE, WHEN YOU MET BURT ROSS.

He was still in college playing football. He saw the rig and decided that was for him. He wanted to know more about boat racing. I took him to a race over in Spokane, just to help me in the pits, because he was so interested. I put him in the A Runabout and let him play with it and he looked like he knew what he was doing and he could handle it.

So when it came race time, I said, "You can run it. You gotta sign up." And he did. This is an interesting story about Burt; I don't know whether you've heard it or not, but the guy had never run a race. I pointed out a couple of guys that I knew in this heat he was going to run, that knew what they were doing, and I said, "Now, follow 'em. Don't try to win anything, I don't want you to get this thing too wet and I don't want you to dump it, I just want you to learn what the flags are and what the thing's all about." I said, "You do what I tell you and then we'll get you racing from that point on." Well, when they came up to the starting line there wasn't anybody in time for the gun and he was the only one even close to the starting line, so he squeezed it and won his first race. There wasn't much I could tell him after that.

The guy had a tremendous sense of timing and a great ability in all sports, for that matter. He just took to boat racing; he loved it. So from that point on, he stayed with me and raced a lot of my equipment. Mostly the D.

IN 1954, YOU DID SOME DEVELOPMENT WORK ON A MERCURY A AND TURNED IT INTO AN ALKY ENGINE.

It was a bunch of scrap parts.

WHAT CAN YOU TELL US ABOUT THAT PROJECT?

Over the winter I decided, let's try Alky. I didn't know whether it would compete with a KR



Johnson or not. I think the straightaway that Bill Tenney had was 53 miles an hour. Stocks, we were doing 50 or 51.

YOU WERE RIGHT THERE, ANYWAY.

Yeah. I never had stuck alcohol in it and raised the compression, so I thought, "Let's see what we can do." I didn't want to mess up my good stock A because I was still runnin' it. So I gathered up a bunch of spare parts in the shop.

THIS IS AT NARROWS MARINE?

Yeah. I built myself a little dyno, if you want to call it a dynamometer. It was a driveshaft housing with a flat disk on the bottom. If I kept the water level at exactly the same height all the time, it gave me pretty reliable readings. So I ground out, by hand, all the rust marks from the con rods and sanded a crankshaft that was all rusty and

literally built this engine out of scrap pieces. I think the only thing in it that wasn't Mercury were the pistons, and that was just because I couldn't get any semi-finished pistons out of Mercury. I fit 'em to my own clearances.

WHAT DID YOU USE FOR PISTONS?

I think they were Wiseman. Clyde Wiseman was building some. Probably weren't as good as production Mercury pistons. I think they were two ring instead of three ring. I know they were. And I think I squared the exhaust ports and raised the exhaust ports a little, maybe 40 thousandths.

DID YOU PAD THE CYLINDERS?

No, I didn't. I couldn't figure out how to do that without messing up. I was afraid to weld on the cylinder for fear of distorting it, so left that stock. Anyway, when I ran the damn thing, it ran

so well that I was afraid to mess with it any more until we'd done something. The first time I took it out to the lake to run it, kind of break it in, I was reading, I think, something like 54 and-a-half with a competition set-up. It was later on that I jacked it up and put the straightaway set-up on it, and a different prop, and I was reading 57 and-a-half draggin' the pitot tube.

So, I didn't even touch it until they had the straightaway run over at the East Channel (Lake Washington). We took a set of runs and I came out with a 61, and I was surprised as much as anyone. I knew it was gonna be a record, but I didn't know it was gonna be that high.

WHAT KIND OF HULL DID YOU RUN?

That was a Swift. Orange crate.

AND THE PROPS?

They were straight out of Johnson, Oakland.

LATER YOU HAD A RACING C AND HOPED TO RUN 80 MILES AN HOUR.

I built it. Hugh Entrop helped me design that and I built it at Narrows Marine. It was almost a duplicate of Hugh's F boat, the cabover.

THE ONE HE SET THE STRAIGHTAWAY RECORD WITH?

Yeah. I was tryin' to make it prop ride like we did the F. Why change that? Could never get it to prop ride, but at least it went 80 miles an hour.

AND YOU WENT TO THE NATIONALS WITH IT AND WON.

Yeah, it was 1959.

ABOUT THE SAME TIME, YOU WERE INVOLVED WITH A PROJECT ON THE MERCURY B, DEVELOPING A TUNED EXHAUST. WHAT CAN YOU TELL US ABOUT THAT?

It wasn't my project. That came from OshKosh, that came from the Mercury labs. It was winter and the Hot Rod was runnin' the tail off the

Mercury. Not in the straightaways, particularly, but around the course.

IT COULD ACCELERATE FASTER?

Yeah. And Mercury, the guys at the lab back there finally determined it was due to some tuning in the exhaust system that Hot Rod had inadvertently come up with. The Mercury was de-tuned down through the exhaust system, for some strange reason and they couldn't figure out why. They finally gave up trying to find out why. They just went ahead and built some tuned exhaust in it.

I think that was the first time we'd played with tuned exhaust in the country. Dieter Konig had put tuned exhaust in his race engines in Europe and the first time we saw those was in 1957 at Shreveport, the Alky Nationals.

Anyway, they (Mercury) did a nice job building these stacks into the driveshaft housing. but it was winter and they needed to test it. They didn't have anybody down in Florida to test it. So, Charlie (Strang) called me and he says, "Are you set up to test it out there?" He knew I had a stock B engine that he had shipped me. I was on a retainer during this time. So, "Sure."

We used the engine he had shipped out to use as a base for any kind of testing. Then he shipped out this array of welded up pieces of sheet metal. It was the damndest thing you ever saw. This whole thing, from the cylinder block down, was little pieces of sheet metal that were welded together to form this thing. I'll bet you there wasn't a section in there over an inch long, without a weld, for both pipes. They were interwound, just like they did in the casting that was eventually built. This was the prototype he sent out. He said, "I don't know how many runs you'll get out of it, but we've already got some runs on the dyno, now see what it'll do on the boat."

So, we set it up on the rig and I tested it. Backed the spark way down 'cause it didn't need it, the spark was advanced so far. And it was goin' like

hell. So to verify it, I got Billy Schumacher. He had a Hot Rod and he was runnin' everybody's tail off in B Stock Hydro with the Hot Rod. He came over for a day and I got a course set up and we ran it on my boat. I ran it and he ran it. Then we put it on his boat and did the same thing. And there was no question about it that this thing was gonna run the tail off any Hot Rod.

THEY'D MADE AN ADVANCEMENT.

You bet. I got ahold of Strang that night when we were through with those tests, probably about 1:30 or 2:00 in the morning his time, and told him the results. He was happier than hell. They went ahead and built it.

SPEAKING OF BILLY SCHUMACHER, HE WAS AN OBVIOUS TALENT.

You bet. He lived right on the lake (Washington) and his dad was real adamant on him driving. Bill, Sr., was a helluva nice guy, but he just made Bill go out and run that damn boat, regardless of which one it was. He had to go out and run so many hours after school every night, just like homework. And Bill, Sr., just kept on him, He got pretty good, anyway. So Billy grew up, you know, running all the time, and testing. I liked Bill. He was a nice kid. He did his homework well. He turned out to be a helluva driver.

This is the end of part one of our interview with Jack Leek. Next month in Pit Previews, Leek talks about famous straightaway trials with Hugh Entrop and Burt Ross. Be sure to read part two next month.

AN INTERVIEW WITH JACK LEEK

Part 2

Last month in part one, Jack Leek discussed how he started outboard racing in the 1940s. This month, he recalls his involvement with straightaway record attempts by Hugh Entrop and Burt Ross. Craig Fjarlie asked the questions.

HUGH ENTROP HAD HEARD ABOUT A SIX-CYLINDER ENGINE BEING DEVELOPED BY MERCURY, SO HE BUILT A BOAT FOR IT. THEN THE ENGINE DIDN'T COME OUT SO THE BOAT SAT FOR A COUPLE OF YEARS.

That's correct.

THE ENGINE CAME OUT ABOUT THE TIME SCOTT-ATWATER WAS GOING TO TRY TO BREAK THE 100 MPH MARK.

Here's exactly the way it happened. Hugh had the boat and we had talked, the two of us, over dinners or martinis or whatever, how to make a boat prop ride like an inboard. We felt as soon as we did we'd really reduce friction and we should be able to set some records.

In anticipation of a six-cylinder Mercury coming out, with a racing gearcase on it, he built this boat. It was a beauty but there wasn't anything to hang on it to know whether it'd work or not. It was the winter, in December, I think, of 1957. Charlie Strang called me at home in Tacoma. He asked me if I could get Entrop away from work for maybe a month. I said, "I don't know, what've you got in mind?" He said, "We've finally got a prototype of a six-cylinder engine with the racing gearcase. I understand Entrop's got a boat that would be ideally suited for it."

Of course Charlie, at this time, was familiar with the stuff we'd been racing in F class with the four-cylinder, and doing very well. So I said, "Let me talk to him. If we can break him free, then what?" And he said, "Then you've gotta bring the boat down to Florida and we'll set up the straightaway and we'll try to break the record." Sounds great, so I said, "I'll get back to you."

I got ahold of Entrop. It was a Sunday afternoon and it was colder than hell outside, it was mid-winter. Entrop was very enthused over this. He said, "Let me call my boss and see if I can get a



leave of absence. Maybe I'll have you call him afterwards, or he can call you, and verify all this." I don't remember the details of all that but we did break Hugh free from work for a period of a month; month-and-a-half, maybe. Hugh and I, with his 1950 DeSoto and the boat on top, took off and drove to Florida.

We were supposed to run this over on Lake X. Well, where's Lake X? Nobody would tell us; this is super-secret. We were at Mercury's test basin at Midnight Pass, Sarasota. About two days after arriving, [Carl] Kiekhaefer apparently had called Joe Anderson, who was the base manager there, and told him to get Entrop and Leek up to New York because the New York boat show was going on and the boat Bill Tenney was driving with the McCulloch engine on it [McCulloch had just purchased the Scott-Atwater line -- Ed.] was at the boat show and he wanted us to see it. So they put us on an airplane and we flew to New York and then spent three days in a hotel room waiting for Carl to take us to the boat show.

It was absolutely ridiculous. Entrop was fit to be tied; he wanted to go home right now and I couldn't blame him. I was trying to hold this thing together knowing that it would blow over and we'd get to run.

Finally we got to the boat show on about the fourth day, I guess through Charlie Strang being a mediary and quieting Carl down and letting us go by ourselves. The idea was that Carl insisted he'd take us himself. So anyway, that didn't work. We spent a day lookin' at that thing at the boat show and decided it was a fiasco. When we reported that to Carl he decided okay, let's get back down to Florida and get to work. So that night, we climbed on his twin Beech, with a pilot that was already worn out from flying, and he flew us to Sarasota. And then got fired because he wouldn't fly the airplane back. He was all by himself, no co-pilot or anything, but that was Carl. We spent the better part of three weeks down there testing, and we really didn't have any propellers. Everything was Don Henrich, the propeller man for Mercury at the time, but he was not familiar with surfacing props. We had called Hi Johnson to try to get him to build a left-hand rotation outboard prop, and he wouldn't do it.

About that time, Hugh had to get back to work, no question about it. He was already going to be late; we'd made a couple of calls to Boeing to smooth the waters for him. Hugh ended up flying home, as much as he hated to fly, and I drove the old DeSoto and the boat back to Washington. I can't remember the details of how we did it, but I spent about another week and-a-half or two weeks after he went home trying to sell Charlie Strang on carrying on the project in Seattle. He sold Carl on the idea and so we did it. Operated out of Ted Jones' boathouse.

ON THE EAST CHANNEL OF LAKE WASHINGTON.

Yeah. on the East Channel. And ultimately it became successful and we were very happy with it. I might add -- I don't know whether Entrop told you this or not -- we must've made six or eight runs at least over 100 miles an hour and didn't know it. No matter what we did, what props we put on or anything else, we'd read 96 miles an hour. We were gettin' pretty damn frustrated. You had to wait for the right winds and everything. Well, the boat looked like it was going, but the speedometer wasn't reading it. Finally, one afternoon, Hugh found that there was a leak in the pitot tube. The pitot tube was built into the [skid] fin. Eventually we were gonna take it off anyway. When we finally fixed the leak, we were runnin' about 110 and had been all this time and didn't realize it. So, everything looked pretty good and I called the factory and told Charlie what we were doing and we were ready any time. They were out there the next day, and we ran successfully.

WHO MADE THE PROP, WAS IT RON JONES?

That's a very good point. That was Ronnie Jones, and that was one of the reasons I wanted to come back, because we needed props. We weren't going any place without the right props. So, Ron Jones immediately went to work and built a pattern for it. I guess he had a couple of props that we ran, and that did the job.

WAS IT A THREE-BLADE OR TWO-BLADE?

It was a two-blade. I should include one other thing. The one thing we did down at Lake X, as they called it, we had tucked the engine under six degrees to simulate an inboard shaft comin' down at about six degrees. We finally made the damn thing prop ride. The first time I'd ever seen an outboard prop ride. I was so excited I waded out clear to my chin. Filled the waders full, but it was a beautiful sight. So, with this information we knew that we could prop ride with the right prop. So, then it was reasonable to move the whole project back to Seattle.

YOU WENT BACK DOWN TO FLORIDA ABOUT A YEAR LATER.

When they opened up Lake X, they had a big party for all the dealers and the press. When we first went there it was jungle. They had turned it into a new proving ground with boathouses and docks and the whole business, and even a motel for sleeping quarters. It was a nice facility. We were down there to inaugurate it. While we were there, Carl had set up a straightaway -- kilometer -- and insisted that we stay there and run a new record in front of the press. Well, the wind blew and the press went home and we had the National Championships coming up over at Lake Alfred. So, we weren't going to stay there, and we didn't. And Carl was mad again.

IT GOT TO BE A CRISIS BECAUSE THE TWO OF YOU COULDN'T GET THE BOAT UP ON THE CAR, SO KIEKHAEFER'S SON-IN-LAW HELPED YOU.

That's right. Carl had given orders that nobody was to help us get that boat up. We had to stay. We were literally locked in, but somebody took pity on us.

THEN ON THE WAY HOME, ENTROP STOPPED IN PHOENIX AND SAW DOC JONES AND TOLD HIM HE WAS GOING TO SWITCH TO EVINRUDE.

Right.

WAS THAT A SURPRISE TO YOU?

I didn't know that. They had their own private meeting. I couldn't blame him a damn bit, you know?

WAS IT A SHOCK TO YOU TO HEAR IT?

No, not at all. Doc was probably the best friend I ever had and I think Hugh could say the same thing. Doc had helped both of us through our racing careers, 'cause neither of us had any money. But at this point, you know, he was an Evinrude dealer. So, when he offered this to Entrop, no, it didn't surprise me. I didn't know about it until later.

AFTER YOU GOT HOME?

Yeah. It was well into the planning stages, as a matter of fact. We were going to run the last race of the season down at Lincoln City, D Lake, for records. I think that's when I heard about it. Entrop and I went down together and while there, met two gentlemen. One of them was Clay Conover, who was director of marine engineering for Outboard Marine Corporation.

He and Doc were having their dinner one night. Doc came over and apologized; he wanted to steal Entrop away from me for a little while for conversation. Entrop had warned me that they were going to have a meeting, but he'd tell me about it later. Well, before the dinner was over, Doc came over and got me at my table and introduced me to Clay and the other gentleman who was chief engineer, Dick Hulsebus. Dick later turned out to be my boss and a great guy and taught me some pretty good engineering while I was working there. Before we said good night, Clay Conover told me if I ever got tired of

working for Carl to let him know, because he'd like very much to have me back there. Well, that was very flattering and hell, it was what I'd gone to college for. So, when I finally couldn't stand Carl any more, I took him up on it.

AFTER ENTROP CHANGED LOYALTIES, YOU WORKED WITH BURT ROSS ON A STRAIGHTAWAY PROJECT.

Well, let's back up a little further. After Hugh set the straightaway record in 1958, I was kind of tired of the retail business. We had another man who was doing the repair business at Narrows Marine anyway. I'd been kind of on a leave of absence, so I gave 'em my notice. I went on a retainer with Kiekhaefer, responsible directly to Kiekhaefer and Charlie Strang. Hugh wouldn't go on this retainer. That's when he defected, during that period, and set the 113 [mph record speed] down at Havasu.

THAT WAS WITH STARFLITE TOO.

So then Kiekhaefer insisted that we set up the straightaway again and get somebody to drive it, if I didn't want to drive it. Well, I didn't want to drive it. Burt worked for a distributor at that time, for Pacific Marine, as a salesman. I talked to Bob Ladd, who was head of Pacific Marine at the time, and he agreed to loan us Burt for that purpose. So, Burt was the driver. Ron [Jones] built the boat and I rigged it up when Charlie shipped the engine out to us.

THAT WAS A MARK 75H?

Yeah, much like the one that Entrop had run except this one was apparently hand-worked by one of the top engineers in the research department.

DID YOU SEE THE INSIDE?

No, I really didn't. They told me the horsepower figure at the time, and I know it was just slightly over 100 horsepower, where I think Entrop's had been more like 75 or 80. Well, in any event, in



our testing, we were having wind troubles and so on, and delays, and Carl was going nuts and Carl was trying to sell the factory at that point, too. He was using his time here to kinda hide out and not get involved in all the politics back there.

***SO, BURT DID ALL HIS TESTING
ON THE EAST CHANNEL?***

No, not all of it. Carl got so frustrated that we moved the whole thing over to Long Lake in Eastern Washington. We must've spent a month over there playin' around, which didn't prove anything. I don't know how many details you want me to go into, but I can tell you some beauties.

OH, PLEASE DO.

One of the things I'll never forget, neither will Strang...The engine [was] all encased in a streamlined cowl, hand-pounded aluminum, which was fine except that you couldn't get into it to adjust the carburetors. Well, you still had to adjust the high speed needle occasionally on the

three carburetors. The only way to do it was to look through a little peephole in the side of the cowl in line with each carburetor and reach in with a long, skinny screwdriver and get on to the high speed needle valve and tweak it which way you wanted to, lean or rich. Of course, that drove Carl nuts because he couldn't see what I was doing. One of the problems was when you fired it up, if it was cold, if it hadn't been run in the last half-hour or so, you had to idle out a little before you gave it any throttle, otherwise it would die. It didn't have a choke of any kind. You couldn't get at it to prime it while it was moving. Well, we finally got a pneumatic, air-driven, big truck wrench with a socket that would fit the flywheel nut. We started it from the dock with this big air drill.

AND YOU LIFTED IT OFF THE CART...

As it fired. Crazy. Wasn't my idea, it was Carl's idea. Well anyway, when you'd start this thing, it would start fine and run for 20 or 30 feet and die if he gave it a little too much throttle to start with. I kept trying to get Burt to not do that, let

it idle out there. You aren't gonna foul it up, just let it warm up a little before you give it the throttle so it doesn't die. Of course, every time it would die you'd have to either swim out or throw a rope out and drag it back and do this all over again. Well, this got to Carl. So, Carl decided, well, it's cold and you've got to warm up the fuel. As much as I tried to explain to him about alky (laughs) the fact that it worked because it ran cooler and so on, he insisted that we heat the fuel. Went to town and bought this great, big galvanized bucket, you know, those big pans, what do they hold, 40 gallons or more? Washtubs. Built a fire, put the washtub of water on there, and then built a rack to hold the five gallon can with alky fuel mixed up and set it in there like a double boiler, heatin' the fuel. When the fuel was warm enough, then we could pour it into the tank and run it up to the carburetors and fire up the damn engine. Well, obviously, this didn't help anything 'cause this didn't heat the engine. When I told Strang this I thought he was gonna come through the phone from Osh Kosh! It was the funniest thing, but it got so serious with Carl it was just pathetic. You didn't laugh about it 'cause it was sickening.

***HE WAS LUCKY HE DIDN'T
BLOW THINGS UP.***

That's right. But this was just one of the stupid things that Carl insisted we do during the process. He finally got tired of the pitot tube and I had to go around the airport and buy a couple of aircraft speedometers to pick up the air speed in the pitot tube, and mount the pitot tube on the nose of the boat.

THAT'S NOT AS ACCURATE.

Hell no, of course not. It was readin' 135 and he was happier than hell and you know damn well we weren't doing anything close to it. But, you couldn't convince him. Well, finally he fired me because I got in his hair too much. He wouldn't go out and clean the deadheads, and I insisted we do that before we ever ran, because the East Channel used to be a log dump. There are more deadheads in

there than you can imagine. So I'd go sweep the course and I had a couple of guys that volunteered to help me any time we ran over there. That took too much time. Carl wouldn't let us do that. I was gonna quit or I took exception to it, I don't remember, but anyway he fired me. Well, that was normal. I think I got fired probably a dozen times in the next two weeks. We weren't getting along. They went ahead and ran Burt one morning and he did set the record. A couple weeks later they went back and tried to up it some more and that's when he hit a two-by-four or something. Prop broke, anyway, and put Burt on his head and Burt was in the hospital, although no real serious injuries. That ended that project, but I wasn't there at that time. I'd already cashed out on that one.

***WHO DID THE PROPS FOR
THAT EFFORT?***

Props I think were Ron Jones.

***DURING THE '50S YOU WERE DOING
CONTOUR WORK ON LOWER UNITS,
IS THAT CORRECT?***

I was thinning out Quicksilver gearcases for the alky stuff, but I wasn't changing the contour, to speak of. All I was doing was just taking the flaws out of it and making it as small as I could without coming unglued. There was no trick to that.

***WAS THAT ANY DIFFERENT THAN WHAT
THEY'RE DOING TODAY?***

No.

***BUT WERE YOU ONE OF THE
PIONEERS IN DOING THAT?***

Oh, I don't think so. Everybody was shaving down gearcases. Actually, the smaller the frontal area and the more uniform the shape, the better it's gonna go in the water. People were doing that clear back in the '20s. It was nothing new, it's just that you couldn't do it in the Stock program.

AT LEAST NOT LEGALLY.

Right. The first time we went to a Stock Nationals was down at Lake Merritt, Oakland, in 1952. Burt Ross went with me and we were gonna both run B Hydro. I only had two gearcases, one that was absolutely stock and then one that was cut down for some other stuff. Well, he was gonna run the D after this and I didn't want him getting nailed with an illegal gearcase or anything, and besides, his rig was going better than mine. So I let him run the stock and I put the other gearcase on mine and they caught me at it. Threw me out and they were gonna bar all of our equipment from that race, but I convinced 'em the D was Burt's, he was just traveling with me, so they let Burt run. I did get caught. The only reason I ran it was the fact I didn't have anything else to run and I didn't think I was gonna win anything anyway, but I think I came in third.

IT WAS HIGH ENOUGH TO GET INSPECTED.

Yeah, high enough to get inspected.

This is the end of part two of our interview with Jack Leek. Next month in part three, Leek remembers many of his friends in boat racing: Charlie Strang, Elgin Gates, Bob Nordskog, and others. He also looks at the state of boat racing today. Don't miss next month's Pit Previews.

AN INTERVIEW WITH JACK LEEK

Part 3

Last month, Jack Leek recounted his role in efforts by Hugh Entrop and Burt Ross as they set straightaway records that pushed the boundaries of outboard racing. This month, he remembers many of his racing friends. The interview was conducted by Craig Fjarlie.

SOMEONE NAMED DOUG TENZLER SET A RECORD WITH ONE OF YOUR BOATS IN 1953. WHO WAS HE?

Doug was a very fine young man. He was going to the University of Puget Sound, or Puget Sound College then, and hung around Narrows Marine. We didn't know it at the time, but it turned out that he was a very wealthy young man. His father owned Northwest Sash and Door, Northwest Plywood, Northwest this and that. But, he was enamored with my racing equipment and we befriended him, Burt and I. He wanted to run something so I got him involved with B Stock Hydro. He had a B that was runnin' pretty well; he was runnin' it on the local scene around Seattle-Tacoma. There was a race down at Devil's Lake, and he wanted to run for the straightaway. They were runnin' kilo trials there. So, I set it up for him. It was my good B Stock engine, and I didn't want that thing blown up. If you didn't know how to get it on a plane when it was jacked up that high, you could blow it. It was screaming. You had to not let it scream too long and know when to feather it off so the prop would grab and so on. He did it a couple times with his own engine but it wasn't going quite fast enough for the record. He was a pretty heavy guy. Doug must've weighed 200 pounds. So he went out for his turn and he couldn't get it on a plane. I yelled, "Hold it, hold it! I don't want to blow that engine." I tried to remember the rule book, and I couldn't remember anything that said you couldn't tow somebody up. There was a little row boat there with an engine on it. Somebody else, I don't remember who, got in it with me. We went out and threw Doug a line. I said, "Hang on to this with your steering wheel hand and when she comes on a plane, miss us to that side and let go of the rope." We literally towed him up on a plane so that he didn't blow the engine. Of course, once he was on plane, no problem. The prop would bite and he was off and did set the record. He ran both directions. He had a helluva time swingin' her around a big arc down at the bottom end so that he didn't drop off a plane, but he made it. I think that was the first time anybody had towed somebody up on a

plane. Boy, everybody was lookin' through the rule book. There was nothing in it. I don't know that there is today. It was my engine; I didn't want it blown. But, that was Tenzler's contribution to the whole thing. Later he went on and ran, I think, 225 inboards. He was doing pretty well with that around the Seattle area. That was after I'd moved back east.

MIKE JONES HELPED WITH SOME OF THE NEXT QUESTIONS. WE'D LIKE TO ASK YOU ABOUT SOME OF THE PEOPLE YOU'VE KNOWN AND WORKED WITH.

Including Mike?

FUNNY, HE DIDN'T PUT HIMSELF ON THE LIST, BUT HE BELONGS ON IT.

Sure does. Mike was an energetic young man who really wanted to race, and he did. He's gone through everything, I guess. But he was a better politician than he was a racer. [Laughter.]

HOW ABOUT CHARLIE STRANG? YOU'VE KNOWN HIM FOR YEARS AND YEARS. HE RACED BEFORE THE WAR.

That's right. He raced in college when he was at M.I.T. 460, F Hydro. I don't know this for sure, but I've been told by other people who raced against him and knew him really well that he was always trying to hop up a 460. He could really make it go. He didn't finish very many races, I understand, but he was pretty good while he ran. I just got acquainted with him when he was still with Mercury, through the record run. Well, before that, too, when I started running alky through the engine. That when we got acquainted and I've known him ever since. I didn't get to know Charlie, really, until I went to work for Outboard Marine. I reported directly to him. There were some people in between, but he made it clear that I had to report to him. I did the best I could running a race program, but he called the shots. I'd lay out a program and he'd generally approve it, but if he wanted something else changed, why, that was it, naturally. I don't

know of another man I've enjoyed working with so much. He a great man, he brilliant.

THAT WHAT EVERYONE WHO KNOWS HIM SAYS.

He got a memory that you can't believe. He used to call me up once-in-a-while. It could be any time of the night. He might not be sleeping, he'd be up thinking about something. He might call me at 2:00 in the morning and wake me up and say, "Jack, do you remember back in 1950-something you did this and that?" I didn't remember but generally he was right and all he was doing was writing an article or something and wanted to verify. But, this guy had a beautiful feature that we all appreciated. He was very careful in picking a man to do a job, but once he picked the man and gave him the job, then he kept his fingers out of it. He let the guy sink or swim on his own. He generally picked the right guy.

HOW ABOUT BOB NORDSKOG? YOU KNEW HIM.

I knew Bob quite well.

HE RACED A LOT OF DIFFERENT THINGS.

Oh, yeah. I got acquainted with Bob when we were runnin' the nine hour enduro race at Parker. He was running a ski boat or a K-boat, whatever you wanted to call it. It was a marathon boat, probably an 18-foot ski boat.

WITH AN OUTBOARD?

No, with an inboard. Later on, when we got to the tunnel boats, we were running the six hours of Paris and Berlin and such, he wanted a hand in that and he wanted to learn to drive a tunnel boat. I loaned him an engine and pointed him in the right direction for boats. He got enough people around him to be able to do that. He was talented. It didn't take him long to learn to fly a tunnel boat right. I don't remember Bob ever

going on his head in one. Bob had quite an industry, quite an empire there at Van Nuys. Nordskog built an awful lot of the equipment that goes into commercial airliners, galley equipment and so on. Not only that, but ground support equipment like tractors and refuelers and all that. Boat racing was just a hobby, but he took it seriously. He had a beautiful shop down there with some fine workmen. They knew what they were doing, building inboard engines and later outboards and everything. Bob was a good guy.

HE PROBABLY GOT A BAD RAP FOR A WHILE WITH THE OFFSHORE CONTROVERSY IN THE EARLY '80S.

Yes, he did. I've said this to his face so I guess he won't mind me saying it now that he's dead.

Being of Scandinavian descent, like I am, he was a little hard-headed in some respects. When he'd go into a project, like a race, he made sure that the people around him did everything they could to make things right. It was not just a hobby at that point. It was hard work and it was real serious to him. He didn't stand for any foolishness. When it was over, if he'd won or lost, then it was back to fun and it was a hobby. But, he was serious when it came to boat racing.

YOU'VE SPOKEN A LOT ABOUT C.W. "DOC" JONES. HOW WOULD YOU CHARACTERIZE HIM TO SOMEONE WHO NEVER MET HIM?

Maybe this'll give you an insight to him. He and his brother, J.P., had a little grocery store and gas station, and they sold hardware. I'm not sure of the name of the town, but it was on old Highway 99, I think, just north of Marysville, California. I think they sold Scott-Atwaters. Doc had a little seven- or six-horse Scott-Atwater on a little boat back there that he was playing with. He couldn't make it go fast enough. He was interested in outboards. Somehow he got acquainted with

Elgin Gates. Elgin was a Mercury dealer and racer over in Needles. Somehow, Doc learned that the Mercury distributor for western Washington was Hunt Motet Company in Tacoma. I guess they weren't doing a very good job and Carl (Kiekhaefer) was looking for somebody to be a distributor. He was going to combine True's Distributing in Spokane and the one here and turn the whole territory into one distributor's hands. All of Washington, northern Idaho, western Montana, and Alaska.

THAT'S A BIG ASSIGNMENT.

That's a big assignment. Doc somehow or other won Carl's favor. He and J.P. sold out this little store and



came up here. They had between 'em, as I understand it, \$5,800 in their pockets. They got with a bank, the bank loaned 'em the money to start this distributorship. That was 1950. Brought Elgin Gates along to do the parts stocking, repairing, and whatever was necessary. Doc and J.P. built that distributorship into one of the biggest in the country, which they sold out to Pacific Marine Supply. Elgin moved back to California to take over a distributorship down there with somebody else. I'm gonna guess probably '55 or '56. Doc and J.P. stayed with Pacific Marine Supply for about a year-and-a-half before they got this Evinrude distributorship. Doc was a salesman and a dynamic character; down to earth. He was going all the time, personally visiting dealers and helping 'em, just doing everything he could to make sure they were successful. J.P. was the financier. He kept the books and they didn't get in each others hair. Generally, brothers don't get along too well in business. Well, this couple did. They did a nice job. Doc helped so many people. Little things that you can never forget because they're important. Everybody liked him. He was a business-

man but not a pressure-cooker type. A good head, and endearing. You didn't lie to him. No, no. Just a straight, honest guy that understood what it was all about and liked people. I'll tell you a story. You know Bob Jacobsen, "Tiny" Jacobsen? Jacobsen Boats and Motors over in Ballard?

OKAY, SURE.

Biggest Johnson dealer in the country, I think, at one point. Bob just got out of college. He came to Doc and says, "I've got a hole in the wall over in Ballard and I'd like to start up an outboard business. I'd like to sell Mercurys. But," he said, "I don't have much money. Can you help me 'til I get on my feet?" Doc knew Bob because Bob raced with us. Bob raced D Hydro and everybody liked him. So, Doc, literally, helped him get in business. He was in business over there for -- I'm not sure whether it was two or three years -- but he came into Doc's office one day. I just happened to be there. I didn't want to interfere, but I couldn't help it. Tiny went into Doc office and he says, "Doc, you've done so much for me, I hate to do this, but I'm not selling engines over there. These people in Ballard don't understand anything but 'Yohnsons!' I've got a possibility to take the Johnson franchise and that what they understand. That the only way I'm gonna make any money." Doc understood this.

HOW ABOUT ELGIN GATES? HE MAY HAVE STARTED RACING IN THE '30S.

It could've been the late '30s, but I'm gonna say just before the war. He had built up a little outboard shop, hole in the wall, down in Needles. Everybody around the place knew him. Needles was a small town then. Still is. Anyway, he raced an SR in B class and I don't know whether he had a PR or not. I think he did. I know he raced Midget. Then he got involved with the Mercurys and raced B and D Runabouts. He came with Doc to Seattle to run the service part of this distributorship they bought. Elgin knew Carl through racing. As a matter of fact,

one of the first races that Carl sponsored and had going was the Lake Winnebago Marathon.

THAT WAS A FAMOUS MARATHON IN THOSE DAYS.

Yeah. And that was probably around 1950. It was when one of the first four cylinders came out. Well, Elgin went back to run it. That where he got acquainted with Carl and some of the other guys in the factory. So, that was kind of a foot in the door for Doc. I think that was how Doc got with Mercury to get this distributorship, with Elgin's help. Elgin stayed there until he went to California with this other fellow and took over distributorship for southern California for Mercury.

YOU KNEW HIM AS A RACER, WHAT KIND OF RACER WAS HE?

Well, he was pretty good. I learned a lot from Elgin. He'd beat me once-in-a-while, and I'd beat him. I remember they had a race over in Spokane at a little puddle called Shelly's Sink. I don't know whether you've ever heard of it or not.

NO.

It's down by Libertyville, on the east side of Spokane, out in the valley. It in a farmer's back yard and it a pothole. It just about the size of a quarter-mile midget auto track. The banks came down deep so it makes a nice, natural amphitheater. There was a little lagoon or indentation on one side which makes a natural pits. It didn't interfere with the course. Harry Woods and I set that thing up when we found it back in '48 or '49. We got acquainted with the farmer that owned it. We gave him some of the gate money. We made a little race course on this thing. It worked fine, but you needed a pretty small prop. Well, after I moved back to Tacoma, at Narrows Marine, in 1950, they were havin' another race over there. Elgin asked me about this thing. I told him about it. He says, "Let's go." So we loaded up that weekend and went and raced at

Shelly Sink. I forget what the hell it was, whether it was B Runabout or B Hydro, but he ran my ass off. I came and asked him, "What the hell are you running for a prop?" He says, "The smallest thing I got." I said, "I'm already runnin' the smallest B prop I got." He said, "I didn't say anything about what class, I said the smallest prop I got." He was runnin' his A prop on a B, and it worked great. I tried it the next heat and we had a lot of fun. That how small it was. But, Elgin knew what he was doing when it came to racing. And he was a good mechanic.

YOU KNEW JERRY WALDMAN. HOW DO YOU REMEMBER HIM?

Jerry was a helluva neat guy. Sharp, knew what he was doing. I'd say Jerry was probably the best driver in the world. The best hydro driver. Real good.

WHAT MADE HIM GOOD?

Well, he just did a helluva lot of it. I know that Charlie was feeding him engines; stock engines and alky engines, out of the factory. I don't think he was cheating, they were just the latest. But between him and Bobby Hering, nobody could beat 'em there for a while. I got to know him quite well. Just a nice guy, the type of guy you'd want as a friend the rest of your life. That accident was just a sickening thing. I can't remember exactly what happened, but I think somebody canned up right in front of him and he went into it. Didn't have room to do anything else. [Waldman was killed in 1966 -- Ed.]

YOU ALSO KNEW GERRY WALIN.

We used to call him the phantom. He'd be going down the straightaway...he was so small he'd curl up in the boat and you couldn't see if there was a driver in it. That how he got the name phantom. Jimmy Hallum really got him going and built a lot of his equipment. Hallum could tell you more about him than I could.

The interview with Jack Leek ran longer than we anticipated, so we can't conclude it this month. Next month, in the final installment of our interview with Jack Leek, he recalls the development of the OPC category, the OMC V-8, and looks at the state of power boat racing today, from outboards to unlimiteds. Don't miss part four in next month's Pit Previews.

AN INTERVIEW WITH JACK LEEK

Part 4

In the last three issues of Pit Previews. Jack Leek has discussed his own outboard racing career, explained his role with straightaway record runs by Hugh Entrop and Burt Ross, and remembered a number of famous people he knew in racing. This month, in the conclusion of the interview, Leek looks back on the development of the OPC category and shares his thoughts on the state of power boat racing. Craig Fjarlie conducted the interview.

WE HAVEN'T DISCUSSED THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE OPC CATEGORY. WERE YOU INVOLVED WITH THAT WHEN YOU WENT TO WORK FOR UTBOARD MARINE CORPORATION?

It had already started when I got into racing back there. It was in its infancy. They were running the crude catamarans. I can't remember who built them. They weren't any prize.

There were a lot of Glasstrons, vee-bottoms and that sort of thing. The people who were running them, the drivers, were mostly just guys that had been enamored with running their Sunday afternoon ski rigs, or something. Some of 'em were pretty good, don't misunderstand, but most of 'em weren't guys that had been racing runabouts or hydros and knew how to read water well. When we got involved with it, when they dumped this race program on my shoulders, this was one of the categories we went after, primarily because you ran an absolute stock, off the production line engine in most classes. Then for

the big classes you had the Quicksilver-type gearcase. It wasn't a Quicksilver, it was...Speedmaster?

THE OMC EQUIVALENT.

Yeah. Later, Charlie (Strang) built one that was even better than the Speedmaster. That's what we put under the darn thing. The racing in Europe was more important to us than the racing in America, because the people over there really understood racing. Didn't matter whether it was automobile racing or boat racing or whatever. They're really high-performance minded, especially when it comes to buying a product. Our distributors over there really wanted us to get into it. That's another reason we chose that division of racing.

Along with preparing the engines and the boats and finding out what the hell we were doing there, I had to get drivers that I felt knew how to read water. The first thing I did was glom onto some of the guys that had been running runabouts and hydros for years and knew what they were doing. Ron Hill, he was good. I wanted to get Bobby Hering. I knew him, but he was so in with Mercury that he couldn't let go of that. But most of the guys I got were former stock or alky racers. And it worked. These guys were winning races. So then, finally, Mercury caught on and did the same thing. We ended up with drivers that were pretty professional by the time we were through with it.

JIMBO MCCONNELL WAS ONE.

Well, Jimbo had been a good stock driver. He came back from the Vietnam war and I ran into him out at Havasu. We needed a driver for a single-engine catamaran. He got in it and won the damn race for us.

WHAT CAN YOU TELL US ABOUT THE OMC V-8 ENGINE?

Those were fantastic machines. I wish you could see one of em. Here was a three-litre engine that ran 11,000 rpm and pulled close to 500 horsepower. It was just like a Formula One automobile

engine. \$25,000 bucks didn't even cover our cost of the things. Con rod screws cost us \$38 bucks apiece, I think it was. There are four of 'em per rod and you had to replace 'em after every race. Generally, you should replace the rods, too. Crankshaft was \$5,000. But, that's how sophisticated it was getting. In Europe, it was Formula One, just like Formula One automobile racing. You know, the drivers were professional. They had great, big trucks and sponsors. But the American public doesn't care about it. We tried desperately to get TV caught up in it. A lot of the Formula One races here in this country had professional TV crews working. I've got the tapes. But, it still didn't catch on. The public liked what they saw right there, but it still didn't really help sell engines. And (sighs) I have to admit that I think just some stock racing, like our 45 cubic inch class, did as much as the Formula Ones, as far as selling the product. That's the name of the game, you know, what are you doing it for? Trying to sell product.

KIEKHAEFER MADE IT WORK, TO A DEGREE.

Kiekhäfer made it work in the early days. Their reputation was built on high performance. They have been established for so long now that nobody even remembers those days, other than a few racers like us. The public sure as hell doesn't. Nor the kids growing up, getting their daddy to buy an outboard. They aren't racing now. They are a little...

A FEW.

But who the hell knows it? The public isn't aware of it, doesn't understand. They are familiar with the old reputation that Mercury knew how to build race engines. Well, we knew how to build a race engine, too. Outboard Marine, shit, we ran their ass off but nobody knew it because our P.R. department dropped the ball time after time. P.R. department didn't care, and they kept tryin' to tell the top brass that we really don't need racing. Well, I guess they didn't. And of course, they're out of it now.

YEAH.

As a matter of fact, it'll be interesting to see where Outboard Marine goes. They just sold out, you know.

***IS BOAT RACING
ALWAYS GOING TO BE
A BACK YARD SPORT?***

I think it's always going to be a back yard sport, at least here in the United States. I think it's always going to be a hobby, a participant sport. And I don't know as there's a helluva lot wrong with that if you can do it cheap enough.

***HOW ABOUT SOME OF
THE BIG CATEGORIES
SUCH AS UNLIMITED
OR OFFSHORE?***

I don't know what offshore is doing now. I mean, I've totally lost track of it because they were so screwed up politically. The unlimiteds haven't changed their act for so many years...(Bill) Muncey and I were real close friends and we used to sit and commiserate. He'd cry on my shoulder, "They're falling apart and we can't even finish a race. What can we do, Jack?" And I'd keep tellin' him, "You know, you've got a show, to hell with the race. Put on a show, that's what you're doing." And I said, "For that, you don't need hopped up engines, you don't need the unreliability that you obviously have. Just take some stock aircraft engines out of the box and run 'em. And so you're doing 120 instead of 150 down the chute. The public doesn't know that. The roostertail looks just as big and you're making just as much noise. Put on a show at least until you get it built up again and get some



action in it." And at this point in history, I'll bet you there weren't eight of 'em running and probably three of 'em finishing.

***THEY HAD SOME REAL BAD TIMES RIGHT
BEFORE HE WAS KILLED.***

Yeah, and he wouldn't do it.

TODAY, WITH THE TURBINES...

Well, they're a helluva lot more reliable but here again, why don't they leave 'em stock? Make sure that they stay stock and they can't hop 'em up. But no, they aren't gonna buy that either, you know? The turbine's probably the most

reliable thing they've ever had. How can you hurt it, unless you stick it under water when it's running. It's got all the power they want. Take the thing out of the crate from the helicopters and run it, you know? They'd have a helluva good show, but they aren't gonna do it.

WITH ALL THE THINGS THEY CHANGE NOW, IT'S SO EXPENSIVE.

Yeah, sure. You know, as far as I'm concerned, boat racing, hydro racing and so on, should be kept as stock as you can make it so that you've got as much competition as you can get. Sure, make it interesting for the guy that wants to whittle on his motor, but still have some rules. Keep it within certain limitations.

TO THAT END, DO YOU FEEL THERE ARE TOO MANY CLASSES?

Oh, yeah, way too many. I've said that so damn many times. How many classes are there now? I have no idea. You've got the alkys, hydros and runabouts; you've got the stocks, hydros and runabouts; you've got the modifieds, you've got OPCs, you got offshore, you got limited inboards, you got drags...

INBOARD ENDURANCE...

Yeah, and then the unlimiteds. The general public doesn't know a damn thing about what you're talking about.

YOU STILL COME AROUND TO SOME OF SOA'S RACES.

Oh, sure, I love to come to this type of race and see my old friends. But I really don't care that much about the racing; it's the same as it always was, you know? But I can't ignore it,

let's put it that way. I sure as hell wouldn't want to get back running a professional team again. Those days are way beyond me. Too much has changed. It's like, if you're away from a sophisticated thing for a year, you're out of it now.

FROM THE TIME YOU STARTED RACING, YOU WERE A SERIOUS RACER. IT WAS NOT JUST FUN, YOU WERE OUT THERE TO WIN. IS THAT A FAIR ASSESSMENT?

Yes it is, yes it is. (Pause) I loved the racing itself, but I was married and had a family going and, uh, you weren't makin' much money repairing outboards. I didn't have an engineering job. I hadn't used engineering, what I'd learned in school, for eight years or more. I'd forgotten, practically, most of it. So, I was using racing to get back to one of the factories, either Mercury or Outboard Marine. That's exactly where I wanted to be. That's what I'd gone to college for, really, so I could work on two-cycle research. It was fascinating to me. So, I was using racing as a stepping stone to get there. Well, it worked; it paid off for me. I took it seriously because I felt this was the only way I'm gonna get where I want to go.

WELL, THANK YOU VERY MUCH.

You're welcome.

Editor's note:

Jack Leek was inducted into the APBA Honor Squadron in 1985.

