

ISSUE 67

THE DEVICE

MAR 2025

DISPRO OWNERS ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

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our website at

www.disproboats.ca



Photo: Pau Jenner

Uncle Billy Wagtail, Mae Johnston and Billy Johnston Jr. came back from the past to tell us all about the early days of the Disappearing Propeller Boat Company in Port Carling. Paul Dodington with Sheila and Bob Burk provided the entertaining portrayals at the centennial celebration of the Johnston House hosted by Eric and Cynthia Luks. August 24, 2024.



President's Letter • March 2025

Dear Members,

Winter is (finally) nearing its end and it's time to start to focus on the boating season. I'm sure like many of you I have a few small projects that need to be completed on our Dippy. In 2024 we managed to sort out the mechanical issues that plagued us in 2023 and generally had a very successful summer. A few small items surfaced near the end of the summer and will be dealt with this spring.

I'm still a relative newcomer to the greatest little motor boat afloat and have found participating in the events organized by the Dispro Owners Association the best place to meet people, ask questions, and source parts to complete projects and get the boat running smoothly.

As your executive we've focused making our 2025 events calendar as accessible as possible. Over the years we've noticed that participation is highest when the travel is the shortest, so our 2025 events are all centrally located. We have the AGM at Boston Pizza in Gravenhurst to start the season and 2025 is a workshop year so we will close out the year with another workshop.

For the regatta, we are changing it up slightly this year with the hopes of providing increased flexibility in how people attend with the goal of making it easier for people to attend and increasing participation. For this year's regatta we will be boating in the Parry Sound area. We will have a full day of boating on Saturday with an optional day of boating on Sunday.

This year we will be staying at the nearby Jolly Roger Inn & Resort. Attendees can choose to participate in the boating without staying at the Jolly Roger and if staying at the Jolly Roger can choose how many nights they wish to stay. Those not boating will be welcome to join us for dinner on Saturday night to join the festivities. We as an executive are very excited about the regatta plans and look forward to sharing more of the details at the AGM in April.

We're a few more weeks away from the ice going out but I can't wait.
See you on the water.

Jim Butler

2025 Membership Renewal Reminder

If I have not received your 2025 Dispro membership fee, you will find a second renewal notice enclosed with this newsletter. Please send me your payment as soon as possible. If you are no longer interested in membership, please let me know. Kindly disregard this notice if your payment has crossed in the mail or by e-transfer.

An e-transfer to
dispropayments@gmail.com
is the quickest way to send your payment.

Barb Dickson

Ebb & Flow

Social Events, Milestones and News About DOA Members

It is with sadness we announce the passing of **Harry Sutton** on January 29th at the grand age of 100. Harry and Ruth were very active and long time members of the DOA. Harry had a wonderful full life and always had that twinkle in his eye. Those of us who knew Harry were always amazed at his vitality and energy as he pursued his many interests well into his later years. Our sincere condolences to all his family.

We have been made aware of the passing of **Harford (Ted) Erb** of Waterloo. The Dispro Owners Association extends deepest sympathy to Heidi and her family.

Upcoming Events in 2025

We remind members that UUMMTs (Unofficial Unorganized Mini Misery Tours) are unorganized and unauthorized and as such the DOA leadership is not in any way responsible for any misadventure that might accidentally occur during any such event. These "mini tours" are fun and we look forward to them each year, but please exercise caution and be safe.

For first timers, come prepared for all possible weather and lake conditions. Bring your own lunch, water and supplies to be self sufficient. Your fellow Dispro boaters will be happy to guide and assist you.

Sunday April 27 – AGM – 11:30am

Boston Pizza at Gravenhurst Wharf, 1100 Bay Street, Gravenhurst
Please see enclosed AGM info sheet for full details and how to RSVP

Saturday June 14 – UUMMT 55 – Honey Harbour, Georgian Bay

The Ottos will host an UUMMT in Honey Harbour. Travel Hwy. 400 and take exit 156. Follow Muskoka Road 5 to the end. The Honey Harbour Boat Club Marina is at 2709 Honey Harbour Road. Bill will work on a group rate to reduce the launch and parking fees. We will depart at 10 am for a tour of the islands. Valerie will provide a homemade lunch and refreshments. Please RSVP to Valerie at **Billvalotton@gmail.com**

Saturday July 5 – ACBS Boat Show – Gravenhurst

The DOA will again be in attendance with our usual tent display. Anyone who is able to spend a couple of hours at the display answering questions and generally promoting the joys of Dispros, please contact any member of the executive.

Saturday July 26 – UUMMT 56 – Kahshe Lake – Details to follow in the next Device

Monday August 18 – UUMMT 57 – Bala Bay – Details to follow in the next Device

September 5-7– Annual Regatta – Jolly Roger Inn & Resort, Parry Sound

A little bit different format than previous regattas with more options.
Please see enclosed information sheets for full details.

Saturday October 25 – Fall Workshop – Coldwater Legion

Full details to follow in a later issue of the Device.

Paul Dodington Presentation

On the 18th of December, a delegation from the DOA executive paid a visit to Paul Dodington at his daughter Amy's place in Toronto. Paul has been wintering in Toronto and dealing with some health issues.

At a previous executive meeting we all agreed that the time was right to honour Paul for his long standing history of service to the Dispro Owners Association and indeed to all Dispro owners.

After some discussion, it was agreed that presenting a framed print of the Dispro Factory by Paul Jenner would be a very appropriate way to honour Paul. To add something a little special, a brass plate was engraved with our sentiments and attached to the mat surrounding the print.

In attendance was Gary Campaigne, Ian and Shirley Gibson and Paul Jenner. Paul Dodington was very surprised and quite overwhelmed by the presentation. We spent an enjoyable two hours with tea, treats and conversation. Paul was in fine form and as usual, entertained us with his many great stories.

Paul thanked us profusely and it seems that we made his day.

Paul Jenner



Photo: Paul Jenner

Some Tips on Removing and Re-installing a Dispro Device

by Joe Fossey Sr.

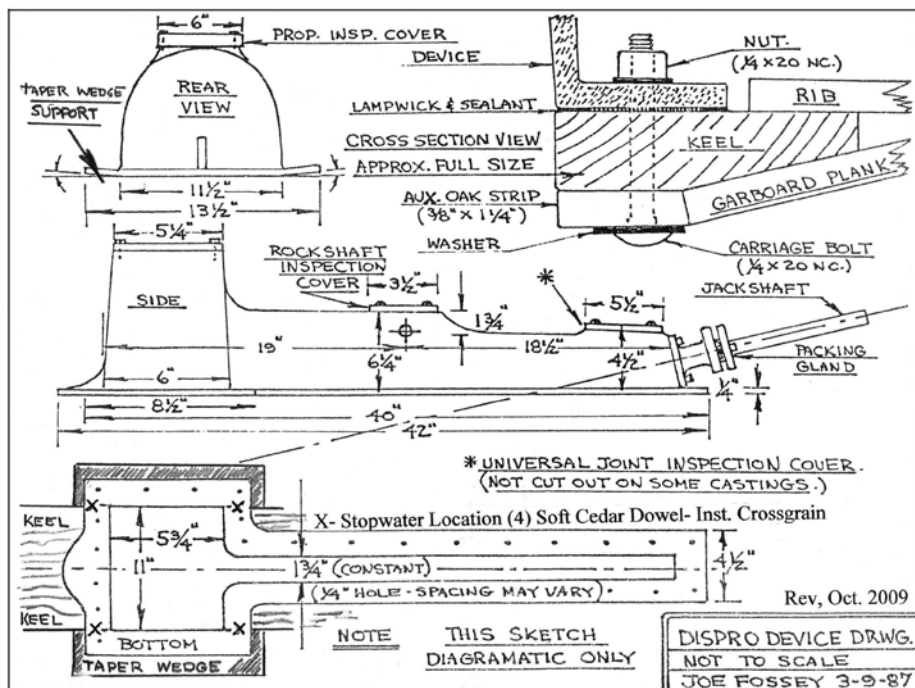
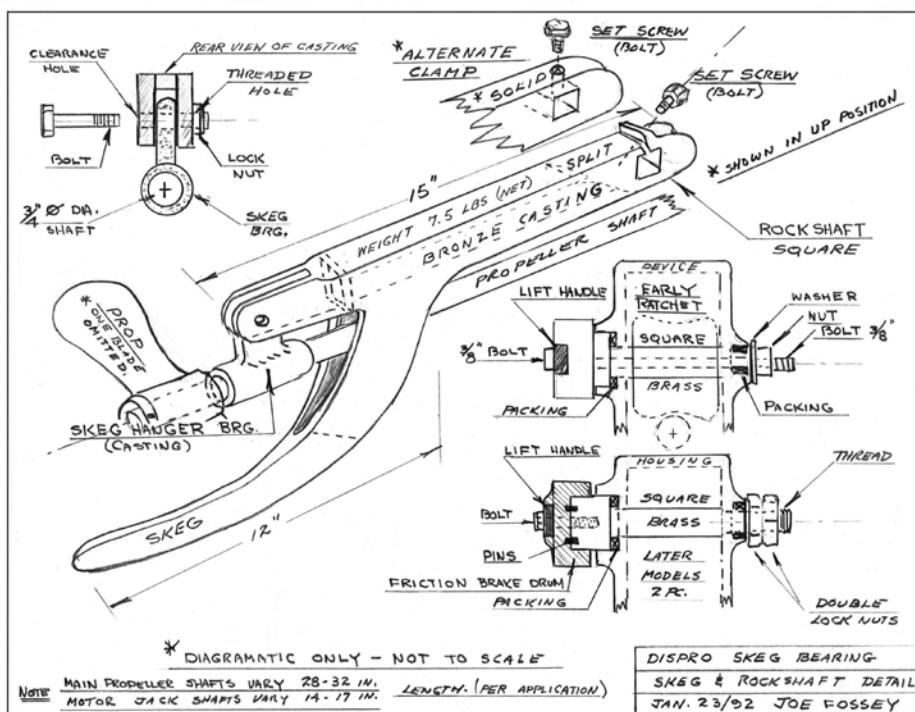
The following write up is presented as information only to assist members without previous experience in this operation. It will help to eliminate some of the "mystique" or unanswered questions that some members may have. It may prevent some of the small errors committed by a few of us in the past.

Ask yourself the following reasons to remove the device? (a) Replace defective or dried out lampwick packing seal around the base, (b) Structural repairs to the device housing proper, (c) Replacement of 'bad wood', around the device such as the keel or garboard planks, (d) Stripping of boat interior using the popular 'John Thomson' method of flowing stripper in by pump and draining to collector tank for return use.

It should be noted at this time, if the device is in reasonable structural-mechanical condition and is not leaking, normal maintenance service can usually be performed without removing it from the boat, e.g. change of universal joint or rock shaft. A close inspection is advised to prevent unnecessary work.

1. To begin, your boat must be supported securely on its trailer, work dolly or stand, etc. It is preferable to support and block it level in 2 places forward of the device and in 2 places aft.
2. Disconnect jack shaft at the shaft to motor coupling. Where applicable, you will have to remove the starter bridge and starter pulley to allow a rear exit of unit through the dashboard cut-out.
3. Remove the square 1/4" x 20 N.C. nuts, rusted carriage bolt heads or stems can be gripped with a good vise grip pliers to prevent rotation while removing the nuts. Do not worry about trying to salvage the carriage bolts, but do save the square nuts. They are becoming increasingly difficult to obtain. New galvanized nuts and bolts are better than original and stainless steel is preferred by some, but they are expensive. See paragraph #16 and sketch re bolt lengths.
4. The complete device casting can now be lifted to clear the bolts and be removed from the boat.
5. It may be necessary to tap the carriage bolts down from above to clear the drilled 1/4" casting holes, PLEASE have an assistant support the wood area around the appropriate bolt head from below. This will prevent splitting and breakout damage to surrounding wood, e.g. use a 9/16" socket or other tubular object the same inside diameter of the bolt head. Hold in place firmly while partner is tapping down with 1/4" punch from above. *Make sure you are both working on the same bolt at the same time.
6. With the device now out, remove the old lampwick packing and sealant, using a putty knife. Do save the tiny copper cut tacks used to hold the lampwick packing in place. These tacks are sometimes trouble to locate locally for replacement. WARNING! With the device unit now out, your boat will be very weak without a backbone to hold or support the keel area. Please handle boat with care, DO NOT stand inside the boat for any reason at this area or the planking will crack, due to your weight and movements.
7. At this time, also check the base of the device for "trueness". There are quite often casting bumps and irregularities which were not removed by the foundry or boatbuilder-installer. It is recommended to file or grind bumps or ridges off carefully, to ensure a reasonably flat true mating surface.
8. Complete repairs to the device mechanism such as welding, painting or other prep work before installing. Spare parts can be found through the "Dispro Trader" and exchange or reproduction parts are available through professional dispro restoration companies.

continued . . .



9. Purchase approximately 9 ft. of good quality wide lampwick at your local hardware or General store (it averages around 35 cents per ft.) You will also require about 1/2 pint of good non hardening standard marine bedding compound, to complete the sealing job. The lampwick is the basic gasket sealing out the water. Its thickness along with the bedding compound will compensate for the minor surface discrepancies usually encountered. NOTE many one piece substitutes, such as 1/8" rubber, neoprene or cork have been used successfully. The lampwick, despite a little trouble to locate and install, works very well and makes your boat "historically proper".

10. Before installing device, check for position and condition of the 4 "stop waters" (softwood dowels) used as seals between the keel proper and the tapered device filler wedges at the propeller cut out area of the keel (2 at front, 2 at rear). The stopwaters should be installed "bare" without any varnish, sealer or epoxy. This will allow them to swell quickly and prevent water from entry at the 4 joints.

11. "Butter" on a reasonable amount of marine sealant with a small putty knife where the original lampwick gasket was located. Tack the new lampwick in place with the tiny copper cut tacks. Place centre of lampwick over centreline of 1/4" bolt holes. Fit corner joints carefully and squarely. Do not overlap strips, a double thickness will cause problems and interfere with correct seal of the unit.

12. Use a pointed round punch or awl to locate and open up the lampwick weave to allow entry of 1/4" carriage bolts without tearing or distorting the wick when the bolts are installed.

13. Apply additional marine sealant to the complete top of lampwick and a thin application to the device base. Use a reasonable amount of sealant that will just squeeze out to the edges neatly without leaving an unsightly and unnecessary mess to clean up.

14. Coat new carriage bolt threads and heads with marine sealant before installing from below. If some bolt holes are slightly enlarged or worn, wind carriage bolt head area with string and sealer to fit snugly. Use a 1/4" rod or punch to assist alignment of all holes before installing any nuts on the top. An alternate method to repair oversize holes is to fill with epoxy and then drill out to correct size after epoxy has hardened.

15. As a recommended alternative, large 1" dia. x 1/4" hole galvanized "fender washers" can be purchased at most hardware stores. File each centre hole square with a 1/4" keyway file to fit carriage bolt head shank. These washers offer considerable strength to the fastening.

16. Some boats were also factory equipped with a 3/8" deep x 1 1/4" width white oak strip placed parallel to the garboard plank and the prop shaft cut out. This method is a very secure way to distribute the clamping pressure. It also requires longer bolts.

17. WARNING Do not over tighten the nuts if items #15 and #16 are not considered, as the complete bolt could pull right through the keel. Start in the centre of the device and tighten the nuts evenly and alternately towards each end to balance the clamping pressure all around the device.

18. This is recommended as a definite two person job. One person working from aside and above, the other assisting under the boat to insert bolts and hold the heads etc. Be sure to remove any excess marine sealant that may have squeezed out of joints above or below the device.

19. This information may not be complete in every detail, or the sketches exactly the same as your boat. The installation can be a very rewarding experience when you have completed it successfully. It will make you much more confident in your dispro's performance and reliability.

The Dispro Owners Association or the author will not accept any responsibility for personal injury and/or boat damage through the use of this information.

From the DOA Archives / Mary Storey

Maigret

Roger & Betty Dymont – 100+ Year Old Dippy and Members Since the Founding of DOA

The story of Maigret, a 1924 D.P. Boat Co product is a typical dippy “rags to riches” story. It might be considered ironic that a farmer from Dundas located her on a farm near Dorset. She was lying beside the barn, overturned, neglected, but with her disappearing light and most mechanicals still there. The year she was found by Roger was 1979 but by 1981 she was relaunched after a restoration by Clifts (Jim Thrift) and powered by a shiny twin copper jacket 5hp Waterman engine (Paul Dodington). Since restoration Maigret has traveled to many DOA regattas but her early years were spent within a 4 km radius of the farm where she was found. Her original owner was the Hamilton family. One member of that family put himself through university selling dippys. He must have been a good salesman as he eventually became a doctor (maybe not totally financed by dippy sales).

After she was restored a member of the Hamilton family asked if they might have a ride. Of course the answer was yes and their thank you gift was a brand new original, still in the manila envelope, dippy promotional book. The book had been found in a dresser in Dr. Hamilton’s old cottage.

But the story begins before then. Roger’s introduction to dippies goes back even further. His mother used to vacation in Muskoka for two weeks each summer. When Roger was 10 years old he recalls Rev. Davidson having a dippy and the spark remained. In 1974 or 75, Port Cunnington Lodge was holding an auction where Roger saw a dippy resting in the sand and purchased it for \$1500 and luckily met Paul Dodington there. It was a 1948 Greavette # 2548 with a St. Lawrence. Paul’s advice was, if you are going to have a dippy you need to understand how to use it. This unnamed boat was used at their cottage and taken home for winter storage.

On the way home at the end of one summer, while stopping for gas, they serendipitously met Jim Smith, who asked Roger if he wanted to join a club along with co-founder Joe Fossey. Roger and son Andrew attended the first meeting of the Dispro Owners Association at the Holiday Inn, Barrie and joined with a \$5 membership fee. They attended the fall regatta at Pinelands, where their family wore yellow rain jackets matching their dippy’s yellow seat cushions.

In the Port Carling locks, one person’s boat got going and the skipper yelled “coming through” which caused a bit of chaos and sent other dippies clanging together.

This was the beginning of the inclusive and amazing club we have now. It is wonderful to see members moving around from table to table socializing with each other.

Eventually, the 1948 Greavette was sold to Jim Domm because Roger wanted to restore another dippy. Paul Dodington had introduced them and when Jim was asked why he purchased it, his reply “Heaven Knows” became the boat’s name.

Now back to the story about the dippy in the field. Jim Thrift was a skilled boat restorer and was able to keep the original deck and seats while replacing most of the planks. Roger was meticulous in keeping track of where each screw went by writing in a notebook.

Photo: The Dymonts



Roger and Betty’s grandson Adam, who attended many regattas as a child, is in the back, Andrew is driving and Adam’s wife Kerri, along with her sister Kristin, are in front.

Both Paul D and Paul Gockel installed the device, after which Paul G installed the seats. Paul D had serviced the mechanicals on the Waterman engine and on the device.

Maigret is the Scottish version of Margaret, the name of the woman who sold them the boat. Most days, Roger and Betty go out for a cruise, touring the bays of Lake of Bays. It is very much a family boat with many fun times remembered. Their son Andrew will inherit Maigret.

Roger and Betty view their dippy as a catalyst that leads to friends getting together. They recall Joe and Irene Fossey inviting members to their home for many years after the AGMs and their warm hospitality made you feel part of the group. At regattas and UUMMTs, there were always young people willingly helping to load boats at the launching ramps.

Some memories from past club events: Playing Trivial Pursuit at Patterson-Kaye Lodge and Rod Maxwell leading a sing along with Ruth Sutton playing piano. To top it off, Paul D sang the DisPro song. Experiencing dreadful weather at a regatta at Port Cunnington Lodge with 6 people in the boat, waves coming over the bow and everyone getting very wet. Attending an ACBS summer show in Toronto Harbour where Maigret received the Best DisPro award at the Toronto Boat Show.

In winter, their strong attachment to their dippy plays out every day from their home in Dundas. First thing each morning, Roger remotely checks the security camera in the boathouse to make sure Maigret is safe.

As to the future, for those of us who cherish our dippies, it is fun to be together, for the camaraderie and helping each other, both on the water and on land.

Roger & Betty Dymont interviewed by Karen Boyer

My Luck

1922 Tonawanda

The story of My Luck goes back a little ways. This year the boat will be 103 years old. It was made in Tonawanda, NY. The Tonawanda Dispro Company was a franchised subsidiary of the Canadian Disappearing Propeller Boat Company and was building boats there circa 1921 to 1923 and where approximately 200 Dippies were built.

This boat was purchased from the second owner Mr. Bertram W Dorsch of Saranac Lake, N.Y. He obtained the boat in 1950 and used it there until 1964. At this time Mr. Dorsch stored the boat for 22 years inside his garage. When his health started to fail and his plans to restore the boat fell short he contacted the Thousand Islands Museum in Clayton, New York but unfortunately they already had four boats like his. But they did recommend contacting Joe Fossey Sr. from the Dispro Owners club in Barrie to see if he would know anyone to help him out. As it turned out John and Happy Thompson were on their way to NY State to see the boat and purchased it.

I guess the good thing was when they got back to their cottage they contacted Dad and said they did not need another project like this and to find another home for it. Well this is where I come in. We went to look at it and it was in pretty rough shape, a lot of heavy duty paint inside and out and a lot of cardboard boxes that went with the boat.

BUT it was a starting point to maybe get a working Dispro one day. So as it turned out all this stuff ended up in my garage. I guess I should go on to say that this boat is an 18 ft. Uncle Sam Model. It came with a 3 HP Silent Dispro Model E-1 engine and as it turned out, pretty much all the original hardware that would have come with it from the factory. This boat became a 3 year project. It took a lot of dedication and a lot of input and help. I'm sure I spent the first year removing 5 coats of green porch paint from the outside and 5 coats of grey porch paint from the inside and from all 47 ribs that got painted too. But all in all, things were looking better. The last thing to do for hull work was to replace some of the broken ribs near the bottom and a couple of plank sections that had been damaged. Also just to mention about these boats, they were made with white oak ribs and framing and cypress planking.

During all this the device was completely rebuilt with new shafts, u-joint and bushings. The engine had excellent compression so the carburetor, water pump and ignition were rebuilt and are still running fine today. Well there's always something that needs to be tinkered with! In conclusion, with getting the hull done and all the mechanics put back together, this boat does have a lot of different quirks than our Canadian made boats.

The restoration was completed in 1989 and has since then given me and a lot of good friends and family some wonderful times boating. The other thing is just talking to people about it, such as the name on the front of the boat and the name I gave it MY LUCK. It seems just fitting.

People often ask about where and what was the best thing that we've done with the boat and I'd have to say it is being part of the Dispro group, and the many regattas we have attended over the last 20 years.

The one that comes to mind was Severn Lodge in 2000. It was the first time the regatta was held there and we had great weather. The Lodge was full and more than enough



Photos: The Fosseys

boats at the docks. Our morning run up to the Big Chute Marine Railway was the highlight of the weekend. Arrangements had been made with the Lock Master to get all our boats up to the top side so we could carry on our day. When leaving Severn Lodge you have to travel upstream through a narrow rock cut that has all the water from the dam flowing down stream. What could go wrong? One by one we all made it up to the bottom side of the Chute. Going through the cut felt like your boat was working great but you weren't going anywhere. The Lock Master kept his word. He loaded us onto the car five across the front and five deep. All the devices had to come up and all the rudders had to come off. I was in the back row of five boats, with 2 ft. of boat hanging over the back of the car. But there we were, 25 Dippies in one lift. I'm sure everybody felt great about this ride. There were a lot of great pictures taken and memories made. As the day went on all the boats made it back to the Lodge safely with lots to talk about.

Back to today, 2025, I still bring the boat home from storage each year and tinker with it. We still try to get out a few times a summer for a couple of rides. I think as long as the boat is working well and time allows we'll just keep enjoying it.

Happy and safe boating everyone, we will see you on the water and talk soon!

Joe Fossey Jr.



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