

ISSUE 65

THE DEVICE

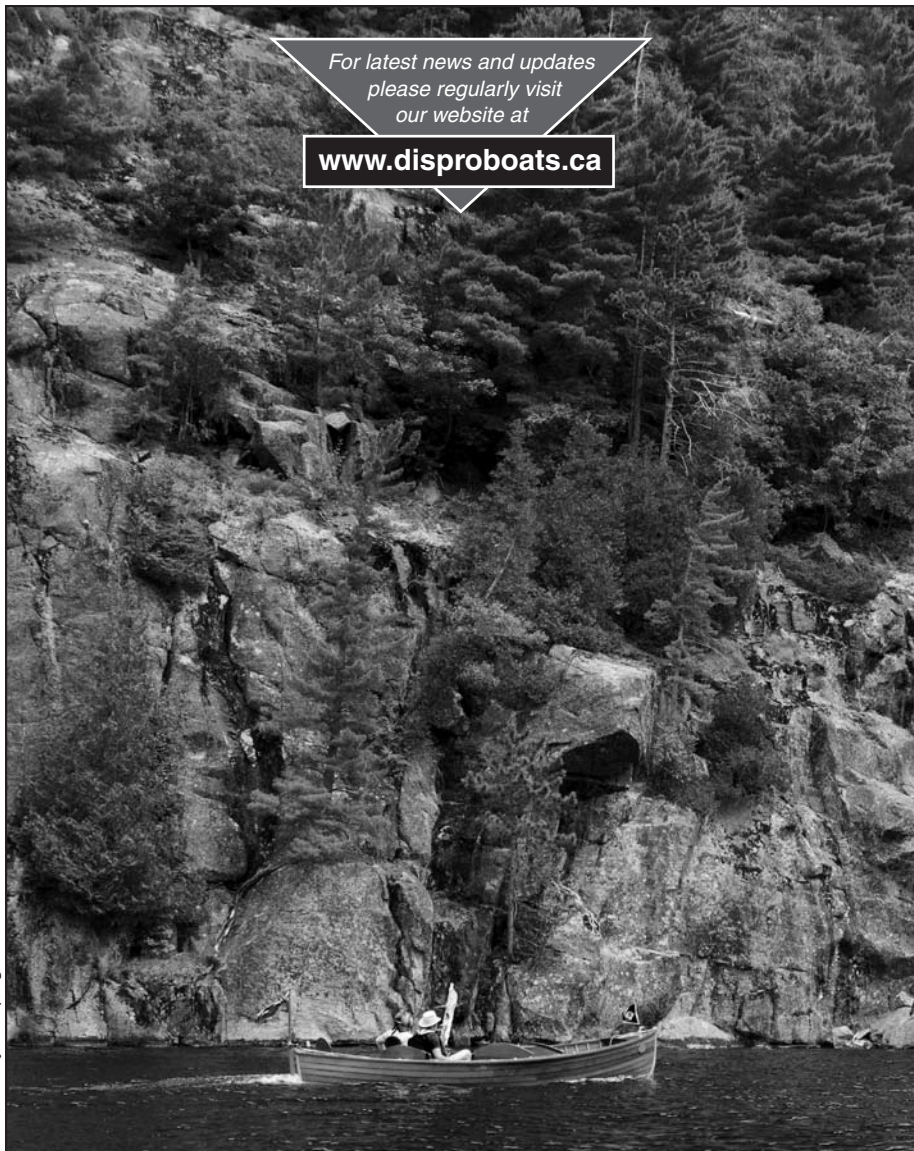
AUG 2024

DISPRO OWNERS ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

*For latest news and updates
please regularly visit
our website at*

www.disproboats.ca

Photo: Gary Campaigne



The July 23rd UUMMT on Raven Lake provided fine cruising weather and spectacular scenery with soaring, unspoilt cliffs. Ten boats made the trip and a great day was had by all.



President's Letter • August 2024

Boats in the Water

Dear Members,

The Dispro Owners Association has enabled countless memories that we all hold so dear and helped to establish lifelong friendships. All of this has been facilitated by great participation in DOA events and by getting our boats in the water.

The DOA executive is currently finalizing all the arrangements for the remaining 2024 events and in the planning stages of our 2025 calendar of events. Many thanks to Eric and Cynthia Luks for their generous hospitality in opening their doors to host our August 17th UUMMT. The Annual Regatta at the Fern Resort on September 6-8 is shaping up to be another great weekend.

As we plan for 2025, we as an executive are looking for ways to make our events more accommodating for all to ensure that we can get as many boats in the water as possible. We have received some valuable feedback from previous regattas and from the survey completed at this year's AGM and will be incorporating this feedback into future events.

Looking forward to seeing everyone out on the water.

Jim Butler



Photo: Gary Campaigne

Jim Butler and his mom Alison, accompanied by Golden Lab Kitty, enjoying the scenic cruise around Raven Lake at the July 23rd UUMMT.



Ebb & Flow

Social Events, Milestones and News About DOA Members



It is with much sadness that we share with you the passing of Robert Clipsham, a friend to many in our club. Robert's calm, steadfast and insightful leadership in his two terms on the executive was truly valued and appreciated and helped to move our club forward. He will be greatly missed. We will keep our "boats on the water" in memory of you Robert.

A Celebration of Life will be held for Robert on Saturday, September 14th at 11:00 am at the Brampton Flying Club, in the hangar. It is located at 13691 McLaughlin Road in Caledon.

We extend our deepest sympathy to Pamela and family in their loss.

Ian and Barb Dickson

I have learned of the passing of Barb Maxwell. Barb and Rod were long time members of the DOA. Many members will remember the fun they had and also the fun they provided, at various club events. We extend our deepest sympathy to Rod and family.

Barb Dickson



We are happy to announce that long time member, Harry Sutton will be turning 100 on October 30th. I am sure Harry would be thrilled to receive your good wishes. He can be reached at 647-247-4179 or by e-mail at, htsutton24@gmail.com.

Barb Dickson

Upcoming Events in 2024

September 6-8 – Annual Regatta – Fern Resort, Lake Couchiching

If you plan to attend but have not yet registered, please book your reservation at your earliest convenience. **Please note that the Resort is no longer holding rooms for our group.** Rooms will now only be available on a first come first served basis.

Please don't forget it's **Auction Year**. So start collecting those treasures. It's always a fun event and not to be missed.

DON'T FORGET
IT'S AUCTION TIME AGAIN
AT THE ANNUAL REGATTA





Saturday, July 13 • Lake Muskoka

The day was sunny and bright, little wind and pleasant temperatures. Unlike the original date for this postponed UUMMT, the boating conditions were perfect. Five boats gathered at the Township of Muskoka Lakes launch ramp at Milford Bay, Lake Muskoka.

Lead by Karen and Brad Jackson, we embarked on a day of boating. We cruised along Tondern Island, into Scarcliffe Bay, through the Seven Sisters Islands, across the width of Lake Muskoka and stopped at the Jackson's home for lunch. The afternoon took us across the width of the lake and meandering through smaller bays on the west side of Lake Muskoka. We wove through the islands of Millionaire's Row before returning to the launch ramp to load the boats on our trailers.

Thanks to the Jacksons for a great day of boating.

Mary Storey



Tuesday, July 23 • Raven Lake

We were fortunate to have a most glorious day for our second UUMMT of the year on Raven Lake, which is 3 km south of Dorset and borders the Muskoka and Haliburton regions. Ten boats, twenty five passengers and one gorgeous lab dog, set off to explore the many bays of this most beautiful body of water.

Raven Lake is named after Raven Rock which is a perpendicular rock face rising 150 feet above the lake and was considered sacred by the local Indigenous peoples. They believed that all the local ravens were hatched there.

We had a most enjoyable morning with few boats in sight on the water and the lake surrounded by large swaths of crown land. It appears as though much of the lake is water access only. We stopped for lunch on a lovely sandy beach at the Dorset Lions Club camp. This amazing camp is designed for families from across Ontario, who have a member with kidney disease and are undergoing dialysis. The entire family is allowed to come and enjoy a time of respite and relaxation and the patient can continue their required dialysis treatment on site. Some members were fortunate to have a tour of the facilities and the large dialysis unit, provided by the camp directors. It is an amazing facility and is dependent upon funding from various Lion Clubs and private donations to operate. Donations in any amount would be greatly appreciated.

In the afternoon we went past some spectacular rock faces on our way back to the launch ramp. Some members were challenged with spark plug and magneto issues and a couple of tows were required. Dippies wouldn't be dippies without the occasional tow, but it sure makes for a silent ride!

Barb Dickson



Photo: Paul Jenner



Jack Law and Lorraine Human enjoying scenic Raven Lake.



Bob and Sheila Burk cruising along silently (electric propulsion).



Brad and Karen Jackson with passengers Karen Boyer and Helen Byrne.



U-Joints

By Mike Windsor

I've seen some pretty creative repairs done in remote locations to a variety of problems that pop up with Dispros. The one that has no bush fix is a broken U-joint. The first task is to get the shaft out of the boat. The one thing that you do not have to do or should not do is to take the device out of the boat! Let me repeat that, **DO NOT TAKE THE DEVICE OUT OF THE HULL TO CHANGE THE SHAFT OR THE U-JOINT!** Taking the device out is one of those tasks that will inevitably lead you down the road of many unintended consequences. Over the years I've had a few people in my driveway looking for quick answers to quick problems they created by taking the device out. If you take the engine coupling off of the front, and the prop off of the back and do a couple



Delicate work with a zip cut wheel and chisel to split the old joint off the shaft.

of Chinese puzzle type maneuvers, it's relatively easy to take the shaft out. With the shaft out of the boat the next task is to remove the old U-joint. In some cases they are secured to the shaft with a solid pin driven through the joint and the shaft. In most cases though they are secured with grub screws that will be rusted into the joint. The easiest way to remove the old U-joint is to gently cut it in half with a cut off wheel in a grinder, being careful not to damage the stainless steel shaft.



Pin and block type u-joint. Notice the pins are all the same size.

I should mention that there are a few types of U-joints out there. For years Gray and Prior were the most common ones used in a Dispro. They were of a "pin and block" design. The construction consists of a square pivot block that has equally sized pins secured into the centre block. The other type is a "sliding pin" design. These can be identified by looking at the pins on the perimeter of the joint. If two of the pins appear to be larger then the other two then it is a sliding pin design.

Today Curtis and Lovejoy are the two big companies making universal joints and they make both types (Lovejoy bought out Curtis in 2016 making the new company big enough to be like dealing with government). If you have a sliding pin type, it's a good idea to put it in a vice and drive out the smaller pin to make sure that the small spring clip is in there. Having confirmed that it's there, then grease it up and reassemble. In future be aware that if the sliding pin starts to come out it will start making a mysterious noise in the device that if left unattended will probably machine a notch through your device. My preference is to use a pin and block type joint, but they are a bit harder to find these days. You can also get a stainless steel U-joint, but in spite of what you



Sliding pin type u-joint taken apart.



Sliding pin type u-joint with small pin coming out. What could go wrong?

might think they will not last very long. Stainless steel does not like running against itself and the galling makes it wear very quickly. Most Dispro U-Joints are 1¼" outside diameter, but if your engine alignment is really good and the universal is well centred in the housing then a 1½" joint can be used and is a bit longer lasting. If your alignment is off a bit then a larger U-joint will rub on the housing.

I prefer to get a universal that has not been drilled for grub screws and to drill and tap my own to match the existing dimples on the shaft. The ¾" shaft isn't very big and 4 dimples in the shaft doesn't leave a lot of shaft. If the universal has been drilled for

grub screws and they don't line up with the existing shaft dimples, my preference is to drill and tap new holes in the universal.



Measuring to drill new grub screw holes that match the dimples



Drilling and tapping the holes in the new universal to match the shaft.

Another job that is a good idea at this time is to check the skeg bearing for a good fit on the shaft, and also ensure that it is a good pivoting fit in the skeg.

While the shaft is out I like to fit and face the coupling. If the face of the coupling is not square to the centerline of the shaft then the alignment will never be right. Reinstalling the shaft is reverse of removal. If there is a rubber hose type stuffing box, I like to remove the hose and make sure that the shaft is centered in the device hole, and not rubbing against the casting. This is a bit more work, but worth it in the end.



Checking that the shaft is centred in the device hole before installing the stuffing box.

continued . . .





Typical result when the shaft is installed without removing the rubber hose to check the positioning. This can even happen if you use a long piece of shaft to line up the engine.

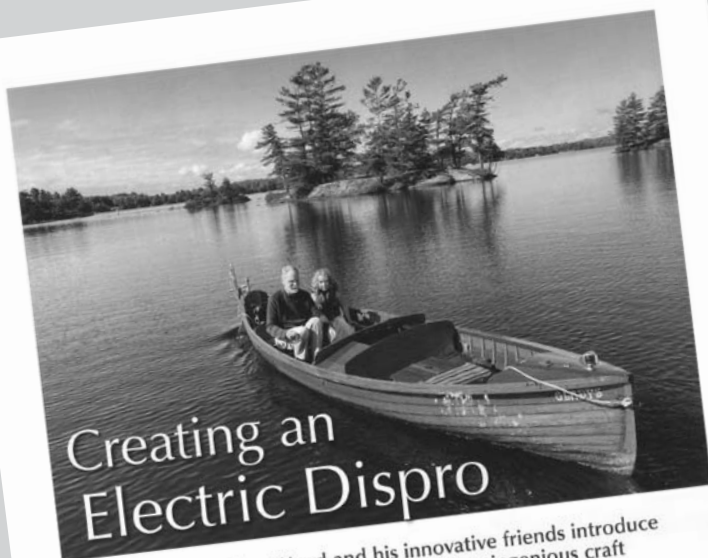


Facing the coupling to make sure that it's square to the shaft centreline.

Congratulations

Congratulations to member Tom Wood for getting an article published in the British magazine "Water Craft". Tom's article titled "Creating an Electric Dispro" in Canada explains the conversion from gasoline to electric for his Dispro boat *Gladys*.

Mary Storey



Creating an Electric Dispro

In Canada, Tom Wood and his innovative friends introduce a power plant for this century to an ingenious craft devised in the early decades of the last one.

With photographs by the author

The rapid development of small marine motors in the early years of the 20th century revolutionised the pleasure boating market. In Canada, one centre of this activity

for a device to allow the propeller of a boat to be raised into the hull. This was not a new idea; East Coast fishermen had employed it in motor dories for some time. However, Johnston's Device was unique in that it incorporated the entire mechanism in its own housing making it suitable for installation in a variety of hulls. In its final form, the



Ron Hill

After I read the wonderful tribute to Ron Hill written by Mary Storey (June 2024 issue of THE DEVICE), I felt compelled to add to Mary's kind words.

I got to know Ron Hill in the late 1980's through different ACBS events. It didn't take me long to realize that Ron loved all wooden boats, but especially Dispros. I also quickly learned that Ron not only loved Dispros, but he was also an expert on most anything related to Dispros.

Under Ron's influence, I purchased my first Dippy in about 1990. Ron quickly informed me that my purchase was a nice boat, but it was an OAG. I then learned that stood for "Only A Greavette". Being a 1939 Greavette, it originally had a copper jacket engine, but this had been replaced with a St Lawrence engine. I could tell that Ron did not like this "upgrade".

After having the boat for a very few years, I decided to re-do the boat and put the original type engine back in it. The restoration also involved replacing 16 ribs, replacing the forward portion of the keel, and stripping and revarnishing the entire boat. All of this was undertaken under the watchful eye of Ron (over the phone as I was in Atlanta and Ron was in Penetang). Finding the proper engine for the boat was not easy. 1939 Dispros had an "improvement" to the ignition system that used a coil and did not have a buzz box (many readers may have seen the 1939 ad run by Greavette stating that "your ignition problems are over"). The 1939 engines were also painted red. Ron offered that he had once owned one of these, but he thought that he had given it to Paul Dodington. At the time, I did not know Paul very well, but decided to phone him to inquire about the engine. I did phone Paul, and he kindly said that he would look through his stuff and for me to call back in a week. I did call back and Paul reported that he did not have the engine, but he thought that Ron still had it. I then called Ron back and reported what Paul had said. Ron then said to give him a few days to look through his stuff both at his home and at his cottage (known as "Dire Straits"). In a week or so Ron called back to say that he had found the engine and that it was all apart in a box at "Dire Straits". Ron said that I could have the engine for free and that I should have Paul Dodington restore it. This is exactly what I did and Paul did a wonderful job on the engine. In the meanwhile, with weekly and sometimes daily advice over the phone from Ron, I trudged on with the project. I retrieved the engine from Paul, got detailed instructions from Ron and Paul and did get the engine installed. I soon launched the boat and have since had over 30 years of fun (and a few hiccups) with the boat.

Redoing the boat (named *Essa*) with Ron's help was only the start of what became a long and very meaningful relationship. If my Dippy even coughed, I would call Ron. He would calm me down and tell me what to do, all without making me feel like an idiot. Several years into our relationship, I gave Ron the nickname "the King" and it stuck. The name was perfectly fitting for Ron's personality and his mannerisms. Over the years, Ron and I visited each other's houses many times. We rented Eddie Skinner's house on Lake Rosseau for the week after the Dippy regatta for seven years in a row. For the 12 summers that Penny and I had a cottage on Lake Muskoka, Ron always visited for several days. He also helped me in the restoration of that cottage.

Ron was more than a friend, he was a counselor, a mentor, a dear friend, and just a wonderful human being. Not a week goes by that I don't fondly think of Ron. I know "the King" is dipping in the heavens.

Les Rue

DOA President 2007-08



Dispro Races and Trophies

Dispro boats were primarily known for their serious and practical uses, such as transportation, recreational cruising, and delivering goods and services. However, their versatility was tested when fun loving owners expanded the boundaries by engaging in racing competitions. It seems that these activities began in the early 1920s in Port Carling. A winning entry received a trophy as a reward.

This trophy whose inscription reads “MLA Disappearing Propeller Boats 1st 1925”. MLA is a 120 year old cottage association titled Muskoka Lakes Association. Although there is no written history about this trophy, we assume they were racing Dispros.



It seems that Muskoka was not the only location for races. An article in Power Boating Magazine, February 1921 entitled “Along the Niagara Peninsula” mentions, “...small boats with low powered engines were entering races sponsored by the Buffalo Launch Club. These races were being conducted on the Niagara River with a trophy being offered to the winner by the Disappearing Propeller Boat Company.” (The Greatest Little Motor Boat Afloat, p. 88)

Paul Dodington writes in The Greatest Little Motor Boat Afloat, p. 152, “One of the most hotly-contested events at the annual Port Carling Regatta back in the 1920s and 30s was the Dippy race. Each entrant would strip his boat of seats, toolboxes, lifejackets and any other excess impedimenta so that it would be as light as possible. The contestants, two to a boat, would line their craft up facing down, each with a third assistant on the dock holding on to the rudder. At the firing of the

starter’s pistol, each assistant would release his rudder and the boats would go chugging off on their three-mile course up the winding Indian River into Lake Rosseau. The Dippies were to go out around Baker’s Island and then return by the same route to the starting point.”

This pistol, given to Paul Dodington by Garth Tassie (D.P. Boat Co. factory office manager, assistant factory manager & salesman), was the one fired at the Port Carling Regatta races.



This pistol, given to Paul Dodington by Garth Tassie, was the one fired at the Port Carling Regatta races.

In Ron Hill’s Epilogue, p. 155 of The Greatest Little Motor Boat Afloat, he writes about the races held at the first gathering of Dispros in 1973 at Woodington House, Lake Rosseau. The races consisted of slow and fast events. He cheekily questions whether “fast” is a term that can be used with a Dispro. Rules for the Slow Races included having the prop fully down and the engine had to run continuously throughout the race, while at the same time making it run as slow as you could. According to Paul Dodington, the engine had to be well tuned and the Model E engine would win because of the heavier fly wheel.

The races were held intermittently over a number of years. At the 2013 DOA Regatta, there were fast and slow Dispro races with some silly costumes and prizes. In 2015 at the Cleavelands House Regatta, passing a foam noodle used as a baton was the activity. What fun! The last races were held at the 2016 Regatta at Cleavelands House. No trophies were given for these later races.





Here is a description of some of the Dispro Games from 1982, as printed in *Dippy Yarns: A Collection of Stories from DOA Club Members Past and Present*, edited by Mary Storey & Karen Boyer, 2019.

Le Mans Start Race:

Winner is the boat with the best time from shore to buoy and return to shore. Captain must run to the boat and start the engine.

Circling Contest:

Winner is the boat which can demonstrate the smallest diameter turning circle.

Paddle and Start Race:

Winner is the boat with the best time when hand-paddled from shore to buoys (engine stopped) and motored back to shore.

Slowest Boat Contest:

Winner is the slowest to run a straight course with engine running and propeller lowered fully.

Relay Race:

Winner is team of two boats making best time when first boat motors from shore to buoys, exchanges baton with second boat which then motors to shore.

Mary Storey



**100 PLUS
YEAR OLD**

DISAPPEARING PROPELLER BOATS

Tiddley Jazz

Ken and Linda Coulson have owned *Tiddley Jazz* since 1980, but this Dispro has a much longer and storied history. In fact, you could say that *Tiddley Jazz* was a pioneer.

Let's back track. This 1924 John Bull was one of the last to be built that year. John Bulls are wider in beam as some of the planks were wider and were affectionately referred to as Muskoka's Work Boats. In fact, in *The Greatest Little Motor Boat Afloat*, p. 152, one of the anecdotes compiled by Paul Dodington, recounts a John Bull towing a scow laden with a load of sand.

It is surmised that this Dispro was previously owned by the Penney family who had purchased the W.J. Johnston Sr. farm. After that, it seems the boat's usefulness ended and it lay neglected.



Doug McConnan standing beside Tiddley Jazz at the dock with Mae Johnston sitting in the Dippy outside the boatworks at Port Carling in 1968.

continued . . .





Enter Doug McConnan and Ed Stanger who saw its potential and were willing to begin a restoration. Doug and Desiree McConnan named the boat *Tiddley Jazz*. Paul Dodington rebuilt the engine for Doug. The McConnans even brought *Tiddley Jazz* to the first Regatta on August 11–12, 1973 at Woodington House, Lake Rosseau. In conversation with Paul, it seems that the McConnan/Stanger project was the first attempted restoration of a Dispro; a movement began. It certainly inspired Paul, leading to the restoration of not one but two family Dispros, and as we know, many other enthusiasts accepted the challenge. First, Paul took on the task of restoring a 1921 D.P. Boat Co., Uncle Sam model, *Pinafore*. He was smitten and then restored a 1926 D.P. Boat Co., Deluxe model, *Wharerah*. He fibreglassed the hulls up to the waterline to prevent leaks. Both Dispros are still treasured and secure in the family boathouse.

Tom Wood references this interest in rescuing Dispros that lay neglected in fields, boathouses and sheds in a recent article in *Water Craft* magazine, July/August 2024. The restoration by Ron and Ethel Armstrong, detailed in the March 2024 issue of *The Device* is another testament to the dedication and skill of those who took on this challenge. Paul's successful restorations inspired Tom to acquire a 1926 D.P. Boat Co. Uncle Sam model in 1968.

Now, Ken and Linda lovingly care for and frequently use *Tiddley Jazz* from their waterfront dock in Milford Bay for evening cruises around the islands. Ken remarked that it conveniently runs slowly for trolling and is extremely dependable, starting with the first pull. He maintains the boat with advice from Paul.

Karen Boyer



EPIFANES 

Gordon Laco

Epifanes North America Inc.

411 Hannah Street

Midland, Ontario

Canada L4R 2G4

mainstay@csolve.net

PH/FAX 705.528.1629 CELL 705.937.0694

www.epifanes.com



The Device is published 4 times a year in March, June, August and November. Deadlines for the submission of articles and photos is 2 weeks prior to the first day of the publication months.

© Dispro Owners Association 2024