

ISSUE 59

THE DEVICE

MAR 2023

DISPRO OWNERS

ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

Dispro Owners Association

Join us for Fun,
Fellowship & Boating

www.disproboats.ca

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please regularly visit
our website at

www.disproboats.ca

On display at the Toronto International Boat Show was T's Delight, a 1950 Greavette Dispro that has been converted to electric drive and owned by Kerry Harmon and Karen Boyer.



Presidents' Letter • March 2023

DOA Presidents' (yes there are two of us!)

It's true, all true...this weird and wonderful winter is just about done with us. Springtime is here, just as Wiarton Willie predicted??? And yes, we will get boats in the water soon!

Our DOA executive and members of committees have now organized the events for this season. They were also busy reviewing possible locations for future regattas. As many of you know it is becoming more challenging. It seems weddings can be more lucrative and enticing for resorts than Dippy gatherings lol!

We are grateful for these contributions of time and travel made by committee members. They are very much appreciated and ensure a fun and workable season for all of us.

We are looking forward to the Annual Meeting in April -a time to renew acquaintances and swap winter stories. It will be wonderful to be together once again after 3 years of virtual meetings. There is no real substitute for face-to-face gatherings!

The details of the UUMMT's are in this edition of The Device. We will have 3 outings this year in interesting locations, one in each of the summer months (June, July and August).

And, of course we will end the season with the Annual Regatta in early September as well as a Workshop planned for October.

All of these gatherings add up to a sizzling summer season on the water! See you there!

Robert Clipsham & Ian Dickson



2023 Membership Renewal Reminder

If you have not sent in your 2023 Dispro membership fees, please do so as soon as possible. You can make your cheque payable to the Dispro Owners Association and send it to 32 Kemp Dr. Dundas, ON, L9H 2M9. You can also pay by e-transfer at: dispropayments@gmail.com. Your prompt attention is appreciated as it will save us from sending you a second renewal notice.

Barb Dickson

The Fall Workshop

As mentioned above, there will be a Fall Workshop this year in October. These are wonderful events and give members a chance to expand their working knowledge of Dispros. Members with great experience owning and operating Dispros are able to share their wisdom. Professional boatbuilders, restorers and refinishers will let you in on their tips and tricks.

John Storey has graciously agreed to organize the workshop. If you have any topics that you would like to see covered in the workshop, please send your suggestions to:

mstorey@cogeco.ca



Upcoming Events in 2023

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.

Sun. April 23 – AGM – 11:00am

Coldwater Grill House and Bar
12738 County Road 16/Hwy.12 West, Coldwater

Please see enclosed AGM info sheet for full details and how to Register/RSVP

Sat. June 17 - Sun. June 18 – UUMMT 49 – Trout Lake, North Bay

Day 1: Saturday, June 17

Tour of Trout Lake. Departure time 10:30am.

Boat Launch is at the east end of the lake, at 1025 MacPherson Drive, Corbeil, Ontario.

Port-a-John, lots of parking.

Picnic lunch at Armstrong Beach, North Bay

Day 2: Sunday June 18

Voyageur route Mattawa River to Turtle Lake

Departure 10am, return 12-ish

Chip truck at Corbeil Corners on the way home is recommended for a bite to eat before heading home.

Location for dinner and accommodations to be determined.

These details will be posted on the Dispro Owners Association website as soon as they are confirmed. Any questions, call Jenn Matthews 705-477-4906 or email

jennmatthews226@yahoo.ca

Sat. July 8 – ACBS Boat Show – Muskoka Wharf, Gravenhurst

Sat. July 15 – UUMMT 50 – Lake Chemong – Ian Dickson/Terry Philpot

Here is a brief description of our place and a map for directions.

The address is: 715 Alexander Drive, Ennismore, On. K0L 1T0

Ennismore is located approximately 10 Km north of Peterborough on the west side of Chemong Lake. The lake is 10 miles in length and connected to the Trent system. The nearest lock is at Buckhorn which is about 22 miles by water. (Seems like a long run!) The property is 1 1/2 acres and will accommodate both docking and parking a dozen vehicles and trailers. There is a washroom available and accessible from the outside and also from inside the building. The old dance hall will be open. I have a collection of about 20 small wooden boats inside and people and food can be sheltered inside in case of rain. We have lots of tables and about 14 chairs. Those who are looking for overnight (or weekend) accommodation in this area should know that they are welcome to leave their boats and trailers on our property. They won't be left unattended as we live on the premises and the property is fenced and gated.

No need to bring lawn chairs, we have enough.

continued . . .



A few places to stay:

The Village Inn

39 Queen St. Lakefield
1 800 827-5678
approx. 10 minute drive from Ennismore

Westwind Inn

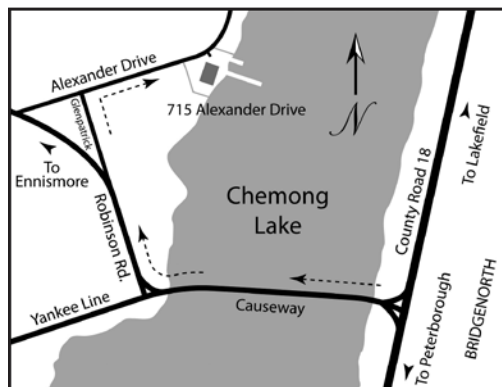
37 Fire Route 21,
Gallery on the Lake Rd.
Trent Lakes On. (Buckhorn Lake)
705 657-8095
approx. 30 minutes drive from Ennismore

Viamede Resort on Stony Lake

595 Mt. Julian Viamede Rd.
Woodview On.
1 800 461-1946
approx. 35 minute drive from Ennismore

The Holiday Inn

150 George St. N.,
Peterborough On.
1 877 660-8550
approx 20 minutes drive from Ennismore



A few places of interest, perhaps for the ladies:

The Barn at Fowlers Corners.

This is a large antique/flea market venue with a Craftworks store on the second level. Craftworks has a little bit of everything...furniture, clothing, giftware, some locally made items etc. 10 minutes from our house.

The Canadian Canoe Museum in Peterborough, for those who haven't made it there yet, is fantastic!

Mon. August 21 – UUMMT 51 – Local Muskoka

Details will follow in the next issue of the Device and also on our website.

Sept. 8-10 – Annual Regatta – Glen House, Thousand Islands

We return to the welcoming Glen House Resort in the heart of the Thousand Islands on the historic and picturesque St. Lawrence River.

Details will follow in upcoming issues of the Device and also on our website.

Sat. October 21 – Fall Workshop – Coldwater Legion

2 Michael Anne Drive, Coldwater, Ontario

John Storey is organizing this event so please contact John with offers to help out and also with suggestions of possible topics to cover and/or speakers of interest. Mark this date on your calendar.

Details will follow in upcoming issues of the Device and also on our website.

mstorey@cogeco.ca

A Call for Photos

Gary Campaigne, the DOA webmaster is looking for photos for our web site. If you have any photos of past DOA events, UUMMTs or regattas that you wish to contribute to making out web site more entertaining and informative, please email Gary at:

gary.campaigne@sympatico.ca

T's Delight

My name is *T's Delight* and I am a 1950 Greavette Dispro. Just recently I had the experience of a lifetime!

It all started several months ago when Mike Gridley, Antique and Classic Boat Society -Toronto President, phoned my owners Karen Bowyer and Kerry Harmon asking if I could be on display at the Toronto Boat in January of 2023.



After many phone calls and arrangements, Chris Vandergrift of ACBS offered to pick me up in his enclosed trailer from my winter storage in Bracebridge. Now if you think about all the salt and slushy snow on Highway #11 and city streets, this offer was fabulous. Getting me out of my winter storage garage was tricky. After a large snow fall at Christmas my owners lost a little sleep thinking of how they would get me to the trailer. With the help of Greg Matin and John Storey and my caring owners, the loading into the trailer went well. I rode in comfort to the CNE grounds in Toronto. Driving separately, Kerry and John greeted me there and my trailer was placed on carpet among four other wooden boats in the ACBS booth at the show. Having spent most of my life in water, this was a new experience. I was surrounded by metal and fiberglass boats that were sooo much larger than me.

For nine days, thousands of people passed by. They asked the ACBS volunteers in the booth many questions, such as what is that handle in the middle of the boat? What is that metal thing under the seat? Why is the boat pointed at both ends? Small children even caressed my bottom.

Despite the signage about my newly installed electric engine, the public asked a lot questions about my new and original power.

The Dispro Owners Association provided information about the history of my cousins who had other manufacturers, how to join the club and the club's many events.

January 30th was my day to go home and I am looking forward to returning to Muskoka. However, the weatherman, did not understand my desire. It snowed and it snowed and it snowed. Again, thanks to Chris Vandergrift and his enclosed trailer,



I was 'snug as bug in a rug' as we travelled up the highway from Toronto to Gravenhurst. Since the snow was so deep, I could not return to my storage garage. I have now been stored in a friend's workshop until Spring. I know I will be safe and sound here because my cousin *Muggins* is in their boathouse so they know how to look after Dippies.

What an experience! Thanks to ACBS-Toronto and DOA for a once in a lifetime opportunity.

T's Delight



Little Miss

During the latter part of the nineteenth century, the cottage area to the east of Huntsville opened up with the building of a canal between Fairy and Peninsula (Pen) Lakes, and a narrow-gauge railway between North Portage on Pen Lake and South Portage on Lake of Bays. This enabled cottagers from Toronto to take the train north to Huntsville, then a steamer through Fairy Lake into Pen Lake. Some vacationers took the extra step of crossing to Lake of Bays on the railway, then steaming further down the lake to Bigwin Inn or other destinations such as Baysville or Dorset. The picture is of Fred (FW) Moffat's first cottage built in the early 1900s.



In the summer of 1898, F W Moffat and Catherine (Kate) McNish were married in Lyn, Ontario. Bryce Moffat was born in the summer of 1900 and Jim Moffat in the summer of 1903. Other children followed. In the early 1900s, the five Moffat brothers began establishing cottages on the easterly end of Pen Lake called Springsyde; John King (JK), Thomas (TL), FW, Alfred (AB) and Charles (CL). In 1915, FW also purchased land close to South Portage to facilitate picnics and fishing trips on Lake of Bays. This is now the site of my cottage.



Weston friends and relatives were also drawn to Pen Lake. The Porter family were neighbours of FW and Kate. James and Alma Porter, along with children Gordon and Beulah, started renting on Pen Lake in the late 1910s. By the early 1920s, both FW and James Porter had Dippies; FW a Waterford and James Porter a 1922 John Bull. In fact, I suspect that FW bought a wide rib Dippy in the late 1910s and subsequently moved it to Lake of Bays as in the picture. The boathouse, which still stands, was long enough to house

both a Dippy and a sponson canoe. In the early 1930s, FW purchased a Barnes Marine classic boat that he helped design.

After Jim and Beulah married in the fall of 1925, FW had their original cottage moved over the ice to a location half a kilometre to the west for their use. FW then built the present-day cottage on Pen Lake. Jim and Beulah were now able to host Beulah's parents during James Porter's holidays. The John Bull was known as "putt-putt" or just "putter" and was used by both the Porter and Jim Moffat families. The picture shows Jim and guests going through the canal between Pen and Fairly Lakes.



Nancy was born in 1928 and Jim Jr. in 1932. They were allowed to use the Dippy at an early age because it was so safe. Nancy still remembers her favourite boat trip up

the Oxtongue River after passing through the canal, Fairy Lake and Lake Vernon. She also remembers returning from Huntsville with friends when there was a heavy swell on Fairy Lake. They shipped so much water over the gunwales that the engine stalled. They rowed to shore to dry out. Through experimentation, Jim and Nancy could also reverse the Dippy at will by turning off the spark, then quickly turn it on again. Another story involves an aunt who was almost thrown out the front of the boat when she accidentally rotated the flywheel in the wrong direction causing the boat to go backwards.

The John Bull plied Pen Lake faithfully for many years. Each morning, Jim would go over to the Penlake PO for the paper and mail. By the late 1950s, he became frustrated enough with hull and engine repairs that he took the Dippy to Carleton Place. He made hull repairs, then painted it marine white with a copper bottom and orange trim. Orange seat covers and running lights were added. However, the most important addition was the Coventry Victor engine. Presumably the old engine and related parts found their way to the dump. A couple of springs later, the Dippy reappeared on Pen Lake looking brand new. The picture was taken in 1961 on Pen Lake.



I purchased the John Bull from Jim in the mid 1970s and used it "as is" for a number of years on Lake of Bays. The picture was taken in 1976. Continued hauling of the hull over rollers to the boathouse for winter storage was by now severely cracking the planking. One hot summer day in the late 1970s, the engine finally refused to start. Repeated battery cranking prompted my friendly Lake of Bays neighbour's daughter to walk over with an axe. Although no words

were said, destructive action was definitely suggested as a way out of my misery.

By now, I was starting to get wind of a group of Dippy owners in the Orillia and Port Carling areas. When I looked further at the hull and its five coats of marine white paint, I started to make calls for guidance. John Thomson's stripping method was perfect, but I was left with a clean hull in need of significant work. I even found the blond outline of the original Dippy light on the bow.

This is when the two Pauls of the Port Carling area came into the picture. Over a couple of years, a relatively complete rebuild was accomplished. Paul Gockel did the hull and Paul Dodington did the engine and device. I took on the varnishing and the making of new floor boards. In the spring of 1984, Little Miss hit the water again. A boat of this class didn't deserve a 50E number so we used a contraction of the nursery rhyme Little Miss Muffet (Moffat).



Since then, *Little Miss* has been the only John Bull to successfully complete many misery trips along the beautiful shores of Georgian Bay. Barbara and I have also had countless hours of enjoyment in Algonquin Park, Lake of Bays, Pen Lake and DOA Regattas. Over thirty-five years of family use has created a real emotional tie to *Little Miss*. To celebrate its 100 years, a second restoration has been completed by Mike Windsor and Paul Dodington.

David Moffat



The Temptation of Fisher

With full apologies to Faust, I feel it appropriate to divulge the rather interesting story of how my Dad (Ron Hill) and I came upon and purloined our second dippy, *Fisher*, a 1920 Uncle Sam.

The first boat was *Emily*, which dad restored in 1971, and still plies the placid waters of Lake Muskoka under the ownership of Miro Forest. (I helped with the rib steaming and installation. Well, as much as I could. I was 10). She was a 1926 16 ft Waterford and, although a lovely ride, she was not really big enough to handle the frequently tempestuous Georgian Bay. Camping on the Trent Canal or casually cruising up to Woodington House for the first Dippy regatta? Not a problem. Fighting headwinds and swells on the run to Franklin Island or toying with death around Point Grondine? Ah, no.

(Side note: At the lovely dinner in Woodington, we sat beside Doug McConnan. Doug asked dad how well the boat had run. Dad smiled and proudly responded that it was a perfect trip. *Emily* had run beautifully. Doug smugly said, "Then you didn't learn nothin'.")

So dad had been on the lookout for a far more appropriate and larger Uncle Sam. At the time, dad was a high school teacher and department head at downtown Toronto's Central Technical School teaching building construction. One sunny Friday afternoon in the fall of 1975, dad received a phone call from a friend of his who worked in an office building not too far away. His office window overlooked a parking lot adjacent to a building that was the site of a Lion's Club auction and he nonchalantly said that there was a boat lying in the lot that looked similar to the wooden boats that dad had spoken about on numerous occasions.

Dad's interest was, of course, immediately piqued. At 3:15pm, the school day's end, (and not a moment later), he came and grabbed me from my last class. I was also attending Central Tech and had just begun my first semester in grade nine.

(Side note: Growing up in North Toronto required me to attend one of the high schools there, but none of those schools had any aircraft studies. Central Tech did and dad was able to pull some strings and get me onto the Tech roster.)

We were supposed to go up to our cottage in Port Severn that weekend so dad had to come up with some excuse explaining to mom why we going to be late coming home. When we arrived at the parking lot we could see that the wooden boat was indeed a Disappearing Propeller Boat, and an old one at that (wide rib spacing). It looked and felt to be in very sound shape and also had installed a complete Dispro engine. As I recall the only item missing was the front seat. It was also completely covered in a thick coat of dark green paint.

We went inside to see when the auctioneer was going to get around to selling the boat and we were told by the staff that it would be a while. They were in the middle of selling the kitchen items and there was much to go through. Dad explained that he needed to go to the cottage and asked if they could auction the boat now.

After some discussion the auctioneer agreed to break from the matching cutlery sets and auction the boat. I remember that there was a reserve price of \$100. Dad bid \$110; another man bid \$120 and dad countered with \$130. "SOLD!" yelled the auctioneer. We were now the new and elated owners but dad had to find some cold hard cash. Fortunately a branch of his bank was close by (no ATMs, of course) and he was able to quickly obtain the required funds.

After paying for our winning bid we went outside to admire our fortuitous catch. Dad now had two new issues to overcome. One was to find an appropriate trailer and the other was how to explain to mom why we had bought yet another boat.



At about this time an older gentleman and his wife came by and he commented to dad that he was looking forward to bidding on this boat. He had arrived earlier and had been told by the Lions' staff that there would be somewhat of a wait and that he should come back later. So he and his wife had gone out for a coffee and a bite to eat.

When dad explained that he had just purchased the boat, the old guy blew a gasket. Apparently he really wanted that dippy. He even offered to pay dad double whatever the final price was. He was absolutely apoplectic. His wife even tried to convince dad to sell her husband the boat, but of course dad wasn't selling and the guy and his wife stormed off in rather a foul mood. We never heard from him again.

We were able to borrow a trailer to bring the boat home where dad was somehow able to settle mom down. She couldn't understand why on earth we needed another dippy.

Fisher, as the boat was to be named, turned out to be one of the oldest dippys known at the time and that it was built for a twin-cylinder engine. At the auction it had come with a single pot but soon after the restoration dad swapped it out for an authentic twin. That twin now sits on a display stand at dad's old house in Penetanguishene (now owned jointly by me and my brother Dave).

Fisher turned out to be an excellent boat although the engine did have some nagging uneven cooling issues. My dad and I took many fantastic and memorable misery trips on Georgian Bay with the other usual suspects such as the Dodingtons, Paul Gockel and Tom Wood. Along with Paul Dodington's *Pinafore* and Tom Wood's *Victoria*, *Fisher* adorns the cover of *The Greatest Little Motor Boat Afloat*. The picture, taken by Paul's brother John, shows the three boats in a protected lagoon of one of the Outer Fox Islands in northeastern Georgian Bay.

A few years after the twin was swapped back to a single, *Fisher* was sold and our future dippy trips were completed using *Sarah*, a 1926 Uncle Sam which was the subsequent restoration project after *Fisher*. But that's another story.

Jeff Hill



Ron and Jeff Hill in Fisher during a Georgian Bay Misery Trip in 2006.



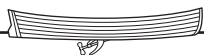
The Dippy Song

In 1922, Gordon Thompson, under the pseudonym of Tom Vincent, wrote the lyrics to a song titled "Come Take a Trip in my Dippy-Dip-Dip" for the Disappearing Propellor Boat Company Limited. As no music was ever written for the lyrics, the verse was set to the original music, the chorus to a tune from the Tin Pan Alley song and an arrangement composed by an accomplished St. Catharines musician.

The Dispro Owners Association asked the descendants of Mr. Thompson for permission to publish the song non-profit and this was granted. In 1996, the Dispro Owners Association agreed to underwrite the total cost of the project and copies were sent to all members.

Gordon V. Thompson was a well-known Toronto music publisher between World War II and the mid-1960s, composing many patriotic songs like When Your Boy Comes Back To You (1915). In 1939, he became the Canadian publisher for There'll Always Be An England and We'll Meet Again, both Vera Lynn favourites. As a long-time cottager on Walker's Point, Muskoka, Thompson loved Muskoka.

Paul Dodington and Mary Storey,
with files from the DOA Archives



Disproing into the Future

In 2003, I was pleased to be involved in that special regatta the club held at Patterson Kaye Lodge for our club's 25th anniversary. We heard the words of the Dispro song as written by Gordon V Thomson and sung by Paul Dodington, stopped on Fairhaven, Evangeline and Crown Islands, we towed and were towed, all the usual stuff except as president I didn't have a Dispro. Now twenty years later I am happy to report that I now qualify; I now have a boat.

My father grew up in the days of the Dispro and he often commented on how he liked the two boats the family had in his childhood. One was called Evangeline and the other Shamrock. There were island regattas held in those days where the five or six other boats on the above mentioned islands raced, and his inventive cousins the Thompson boys tried burning higher combustion fuel to improve speed. We can thank one of them for fibre optic cable but his work with high speed Dispro boats can likely be remembered as a failure.

As much as he liked to reminisce about his Dispros, Dad never considered having one in his adult years. They were a thing of the past and he wasn't one to accumulate stuff. Indeed I can remember his advice when we drove by a neighbour's opulent island that had seventeen boats, how foolish it was to have more suits than one needed, how seventeen boats was over the top ridiculous and how we are all dressed similarly when we leave this world.

He didn't notice or might have been amused to know that a handful of enthusiasts around Port Carling were starting an interest group centred around his beloved little boats from fifty years ago. In subsequent years I got to know some of these fellows rather well. To hear the conversation as we drove to Cellar Singers rehearsals in Orillia was to listen to how everything new compared poorly to everything old whether it be



magnetos, automobiles, or music. The old way of doing anything was more practical, sounded better, burned less, cost less, shone better than new anything. I bought into some of it but resisted a few rabbit holes. I have found enough of my own.

Now, in 2022 there came another boat into my care for sale, to show, to maintain to find a new owner for. This has happened often enough that I was well versed on which vintage boat suited me, was easy to run without an engineering degree, could be made to float and all the other features we like to have in a Dispro. *Eagle* is a 1952 Greavette boat that would have been built by Jim Thrift at Greavettes. I worked with Jim. He was illiterate, the son-in-law of Oscar Purdy the finisher. He didn't impress his father-in-law in the finish room but when he picked up a grinder to smooth something in a boat that he didn't like Pete Miller remarked "This man isn't a finisher, he's a woodworker." He could read a tape measure as far as inches, half inches and in between, and that's all he needed to do his work. I subsequently read the labels on cans for him, so he knew if he was opening paint or bedding compound and we became friends.

The Coventry Victor motor started right up, the bottom swelled after years of storage. There was enough here to make me look twice so I bought it myself.

Eagle was originally purchased by a man named Bears who cottaged on Lake Rosseau. He was principal of the agricultural college in Guelph and to this day the name Bears is listed in the agricultural consulting industry in Canada.

I think to own a Dispro is to always seek to work the thing to a better level. *Eagle* has had technical improvements to the drive system, is about to receive varnish, and should be ready to go with gusto next spring -- it's 71st year. It could even take part in future club events.

Stan Hunter

Back in the Day

If you lived in Toronto back in 1928 and were considering the purchase of a Disappearing Propeller Boat, you could go downtown to the showroom at 92 King Street West. Alternatively, place a phone call to EL-2376 and arrange a viewing.



Listing from 1928 edition of Might's Greater Toronto City Directory.

lishers, Advertising Building, 74-76 Church
Phones ELgin 1481 (Ten Lines). We can
supply any Directory published (See adv
at Might Directories Limited)
Dirinco P h 2 Clinton
Dirks Richd press opr Natl Elect Heating lvs
45 Grant
Dirmitt Jos.G opr Canada Acme Screw & Gear
rms 16½ Foxley
Disantis Laurence barber 1470 Yonge h 159
Vaughan rd
DISAPPEARING PROPELLER BOAT COM-
pany Limited, Thomas Hodgson President
and Manager, 92 King West, Phone ELgin
2376
Dischamps Alfred elev opr Barchard & Co lvs
152 Parliament
Disenhaus Able tlr House of Hobberlin lvs 25
Oxford



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