

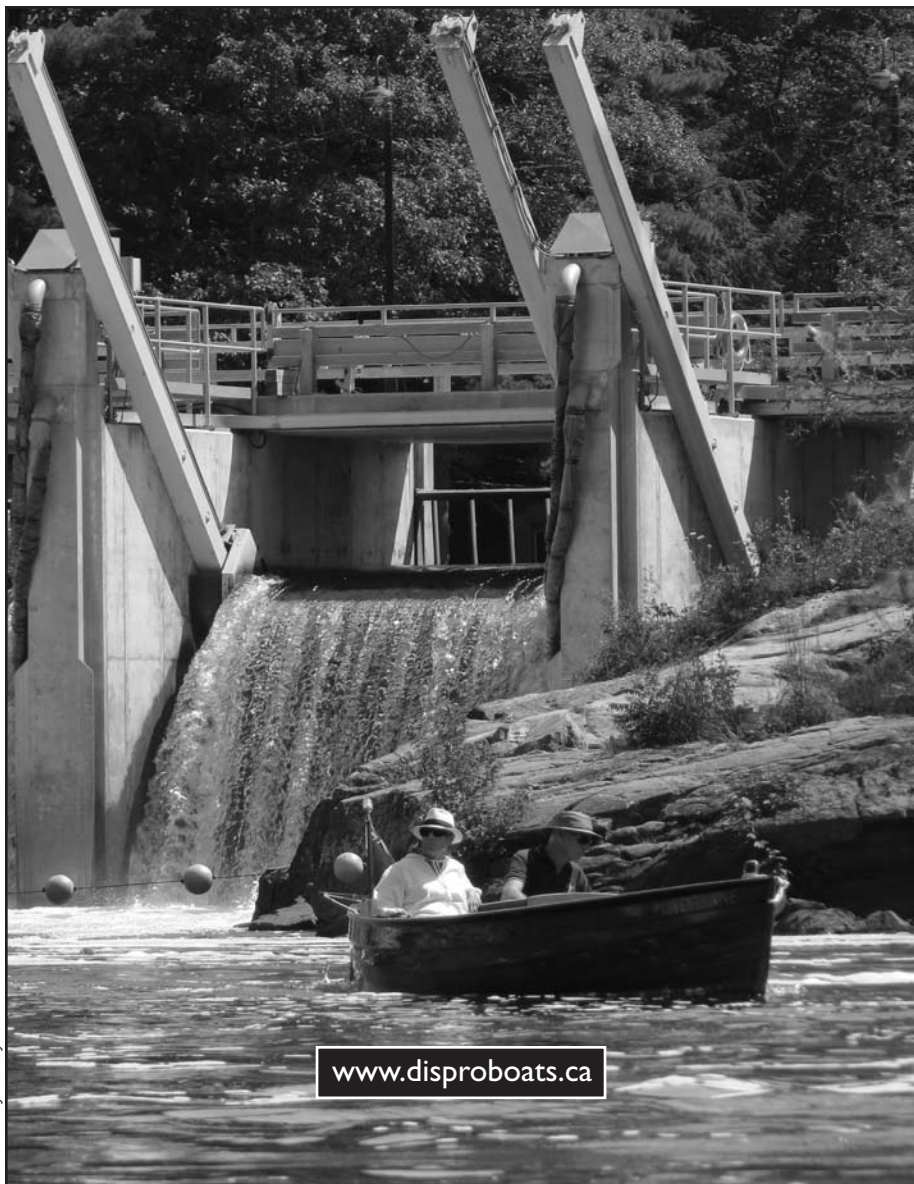
ISSUE 52

THE DEVICE

NOV 2020

DISPRO OWNERS

ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER



www.disproboats.ca

Photo: Mary Storey

John McMechan and wife Jane Templeton at Wasdell Falls.



President's Letter • November 2020

Dear Members,

We used this period of physical distancing to spend time in our Dippy. In fact, we have probably been Dippy cruising more this season than the previous 5 years combined – Kerry estimates we've burned 120+ hours worth of fuel. If the weather looked favourable, we packed a lunch and headed to a different destination each time, exploring water bodies from Georgian Bay to Algonquin Park and many lakes within an hour and a half drive of home. We are keeping track of the directions to good launch ramps at Dippy worthy lakes and happy to share.

Some highlights include deer, knee deep in water and feasting on shore grass, oblivious to our presence; a gathering of 20+ loons, heads bobbing as they fed, also undisturbed as we putted by – a birder friend says these are youngsters who migrate together; unique cottage architecture from an earlier era; and always the compliments from those on shore – "You're Styling", "What a cute boat. You've just made my day", and "You look so elegant".

Our final outing for the year was Friday October 23rd cruising around Horseshoe and Virtue Lakes, a lovely fall day tour ending in a major thunder storm – a fitting finale. Ts Delight is now dried out and tucked in for the season, but we already have a list of interesting water bodies to explore next year.

You must have stories to tell about a Dippy adventure or two. Please do share them with all of us. Wishing you a safe, healthy and happy winter.

Karen and Kerry

Stories to Share

As Karen and Kerry have said above, let's hear from our membership. There won't be much to write about this past season but all of us who own Dippies surely have stories to tell. It could be about a great adventure you've had in your boat; or a problem you've had with your boat (come on now, we've all had them) and how you overcame it; or perhaps a funny or unique incident you've had while Dipping.

We all have great fun in our boats, so in the winter ahead, when we'll probably all be staying at home, pick up a pen or sit at the keyboard and share your wonderful stories with us.

Paul Jenner



A Letter to DOA Members

Dear Members,

It is with great disappointment that we share the decision to CANCEL our Regatta scheduled for September 10, 11, 12, 2021 at Grand Tappattoo Resort on Otter Lake. After considering the unknown future direction of the Covid-19 pandemic, your Executive came to this unanimous conclusion. First and foremost is your safety and well-being. It would be essential that a vaccine be available for us to socialize as we normally do at a Regatta.

Secondly, to reserve Grand Tappattoo Resort (and most other resorts) DOA was required to make a significant non-refundable deposit and to guarantee that at least 30 rooms and 60 people would register for the accommodation and meal package. This creates a significant financial risk to the club should this quota not be met or if we cancel totally, DOA would be liable for the purchase of the unoccupied rooms. Increasingly we are faced with these criteria due to competition for this prime weekend date from weddings. After speaking with Grand Tappattoo Resort, they gave us a deadline of October 31, 2020 to cancel the contract without penalty, hence the decision now.

Looking to a brighter and more positive future, your Executive is already planning for Regattas in 2022 and 2023, and beyond. Our Dippies will once again be out in full force!

With the availability of on line meeting technology, we are planning to offer a virtual AGM in April 2021. We hope this will allow many of you to participate who otherwise have found the travel distance prohibitive. Details will be forthcoming in the spring issue of The Device.

Thank you for your understanding and may you stay safe.

Sincerely, Executive Members:

Karen Boyer, Ian Dickson, Robert Clipsham, Ian Gibson, Sheila Burk, Barbara Dickson, Ann Verth, Paul Jenner, Gary Campaigne

The 2021 Annual Regatta
at
Grand Tappattoo Resort on Otter Lake
CANCELLED

Breaking News

**2022 Regatta now scheduled for
Grand Tappattoo Resort on Otter Lake
September 2022**

The Adventures of a New Dippy Owner

As a new Dispro owner I thought I would share some of my experiences that I am sure most of you have gone through at some time or another. A sort of diary of our first year.

I've had wooden boats for many years, but having sold my property on the Severn and my Seabird some 15 years ago, I decided last October, that it was time to get a boat again. It would have to be something I could trailer easily and preferably something I had not owned before, so it did not take me long to figure out that a Dippy might be the answer.

I had a good start in knowing Paul Dodington from our early car days back in Toronto, the Thompson basement was good training ground, and J. Cooper and I shared a number of vintage motorcycle adventures, and Mike Windsor previous car and boat experiences, so I went in to this with some knowledge and help life lines.

So by mid October I had bought my Dippy from pictures sent to me by the daughter of the previous owner who was selling for her ailing father. The boat had not been used in several years but had been well protected.

October is a busy month for me and our schedules were in conflict, so I could not get down to see it, but buying things from pictures and conversations with the seller, is a fairly common practice in our family.

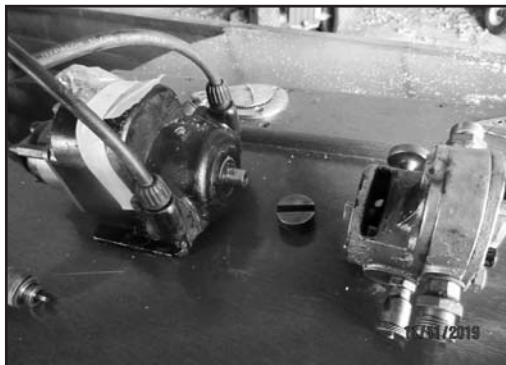
So come early November we drove down to Chatham to pick it up and see it "live" for the first time. No unpleasant surprises and all was as expected.

It's a 1952 Dippy with a Coventry Victor engine. I mention this because in my shopping I decided it could be a CV engine and most definitely not a St Lawrence. I've had a St. Lawrence in other boats and we are definitely not on speaking terms, and generally 2 stroke engines are not my thing. I also have a Copper jacket in my workshop, it's very pretty and you could own it. Let me know. I've had them running and they run quite nicely at times, but not necessarily when I want them to.

This boat had been mechanically restored by Paul and it came with all the careful notes/bills that Paul had generated during the work, so I knew that part was fine. The seat cushions were as new and the wood was good but needing some more varnish. First comes a name, so we named her "Hermione" as most of our boats have been called.

I could not get the motor going and determined I had a mag problem as in no spark. The diary I had from the previous owner showed they spent more time fiddling with the mag than out enjoying the boat.

I called Paul for advice but the mag was the one thing he had not worked on, since the previous owner was happy with the way it was. He also did his boating on a small lake, probably in sight of his cottage and limited to short runs. Paul had cautioned me that issues tend to happen at or before the 1 hr mark on a mag that has not been rebuilt.



Photos: Dorein Bertelelli

With a lead supplied by John, I got the mag rebuilt with new armature and condensers. While it was out I lapped in some scoring marks on the water pump.

Back in the engine by late November and in a few turns it was running, problem was the water was hard so will have to wait til Spring.

Early spring we are always in Europe but come May/June we should be good. Not so, with Covid all marinas were closed, but eventually on June 26th we went for our first run on the Holland river.

All went well initially, instant start, oil pressure, water pump, it was all good, until I decided to basically make a u turn in the river. I quickly found out that a Dippy is not turned as other boats are, and ended up in a very weedy section near the bank. Not having reverse and a Titanic turning circle adds to excitement or fun depending on your outlook on life. We are used to excitement at a faster pace, I race cars and Anne is in to parachute jumping and or walking outside the upper ledge of the CN tower tied to a cord. Dippy excitement takes place in slow motion, it's a learning curve. We eventually got back to the dock and when we had the boat on the trailer, we saw that we had enough greenery on the prop to fill 2 buckets.

July was a busy month and we had the boat out every week carefully working towards longer runs and then exceeding the dreaded 1 hr threshold and including a run from Port Carling with other Club members. Lost power at one point and needed a tow to the lunch stop. On the return we were barely at 1/2 speed. Carb and magneto were suspects but I had my doubts and figured I had a valve problem. On the way back, because we were so far behind the other boats, I took a couple of shortcuts across some bays and found out the "device" works very well. It's quite a surprise the first time it happens!

How to set the valves was not initially obvious, so I called John who kindly sent me pictures of his spare engine showing the valve arrangement. One ex. valve was way too tight and that would have definitely caused a power loss when warm/hot. Oil pressure has been all over the place and eventually settled around 5-10 ? psi. A few talks with Paul and I decided to clean the oil pump pressure relief valve as much as I could, without removing the flywheel.



Removed the spring and ball for the pressure relief valve and used solvent and high air pressure for cleaning. Reassembled the unit and slightly increased the spring pressure. I now had 50 + psi. so readjusted and was back to barely 10 and this game went on for a bit, so given the work to get it all to work, I may leave it alone. Surprisingly the extra pressure has not caused extra oil leaks, and in 2 hrs running I end up with the equivalent of a spoonful of oil in the bilges, so not a problem. I am using 20-50 w so may try a 10-30 and see if I can drop the pressure a bit.

A few local runs in August and the engine ran fine, and then came the Washago incident. Washago has a public launching site, well cared for and with rubber edged docks at a good Dippy height, so launching was a breeze.

continued . . .



There is a sort of channel out in to lake Couchiching but the markings are clumps of stone barely above the water and not quite obvious at first. Well we managed to get the Dippy partly on to a large boulder!

Checked the bilges and all was dry, so far so good. No amount of pushing with the oars would help, so Anne hopped over the side on to the boulder and between us eventually we were afloat again. Hermione was now drifting away from the boulder and I heard Anne calling out..."come back for me" as she was standing nearly waist deep in water.

Unfortunately I did not have a camera, because as I paddled back for her, I thought it would have been funny to take a picture of her standing in the lake, and then send it to my mother-in law. "Last I saw of your daughter" or words to that effect in the note.

Getting Anne back in the boat was interesting as I had to lean on the starboard side, while she struggled to get herself up and in to the boat on the port side. Are we having fun yet?

We then went up the Severn for a while and generally cruised around the north end of the lake. September saw us out several times including down at Hydroglen (our old home) and on to Sparrow lake and up the Severn river and by keeping our heads down and lifting our feet, we could just exceed the posted speed limit of 10 kph against the current. Real speed demons !

For those interested in mechanical data, the cylinder head temp were around 175 F at full speed, and the mag outer casing about 100 F. I know because I take my IF gun with me, so if we have a failure/problem, I can blame or eliminate certain parts of the engine.

Overall it's been a good adventure and we are still learning. The lack of a tiller and working the lines to steer can be challenging as is planning a sharp turn. No reverse is workable, a bit like sailing, requires some planning as you sort of drift in to a docking point with paddles ready.

As I write this in October, I think our boating season is over, mainly because getting the boat on to the trailer generally involves getting a bit wet, and it's getting chilly.

So far no regrets in Dippy ownership.

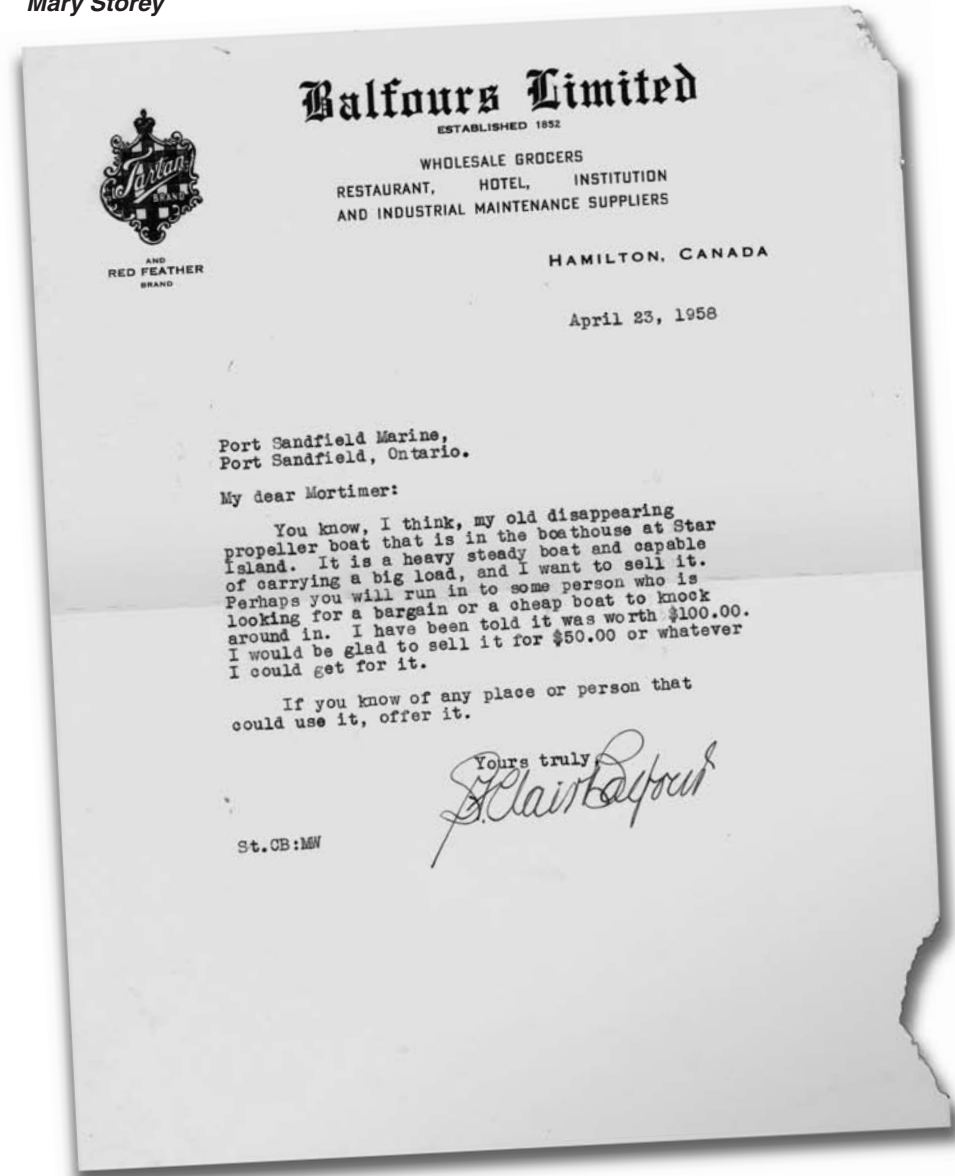
Dorien Berteletti

The Price of Dispros

The letter below was found in some papers from Port Sandfield Marina. Thanks to Pam Blair for sharing.

In 1954, Greavette Dispros cost \$1038 plus \$87 tax for a total of \$1125 per boat. In the 1950s, with the invention and sales of fibreglass boats, all wooden boats were declining in value. We wonder who got the boat for this bargain basement price of \$50!

Mary Storey



So Simple, A Child Can Run It.



It's too bad the photographer chopped off the stem, but this is an otherwise dandy period shot of the van Nostrand's c.1924 deluxe dippy on Lake Joe. Note that it has a stern light but it's not deployed, two kids can sit comfortably in the stern seat, the varnish is coming off the planks, not a life jacket in sight, and the ubiquitous bilge pump discharge hose hangs over the bow deck as it should. The boat's whereabouts today is unknown, but presumably scrapped. Its boathouse was standing until recently. Photo taken mid 1930s near Killiecrankie. (We were near here on the misery trip last week).

Courtesy Will Gray, submitted by Paul Gockel

Old U-joints — saved 'em, fixt 'em, used 'em.

With the demise of our wonderful old Gray and Prior Machine Co., it has created an entirely new definition for the word scrap. Old dippy universal joints I had once cast aside as no longer useful have come back to life and now live contentedly in my used u-joint box. Of course, these joints are horribly rusty and pitted on the outside, but strangely and inexplicably, many have almost no lash, as though they were brand new. If your propeller rotates $\frac{1}{4}$ turn before the engine does, it's most decidedly scrap.

Thankfully, most of the joints in my collection are the larger G&P Atlas joints, although there is one smaller one. Larger joints do not preclude longevity. Considering what's in my collection, I'll have enough joints to keep Idle Hour going for another 675 years! Where they all came from I cannot say, but having collected dippy parts for over 50 years, (I've stopped now) I was bound to come across something useful. In 1968, Ron Whitehouse told me he had a scrap dippy engine. I replied, there is no such thing as dippy scrap!

I've started in on these joints after a few nights of wondering how to do it. When the Eureka moment hit, I knew it, so I got to work. Reuse your u-joint if it's reusable. Keep in mind this is not a rebuilding process, but just one of being able to reuse what was once considered lost. I won't bore you with the details because I'm sure no one will want to do this job, nor will any of you want one of these joints, nor does any of you save old

Photos: Paul Gockel



u-joints. But I've successfully accomplished it and know that when replacement time comes, I'll have original stock to use—ready to rust. Try it yourself. I only wish I knew what kept them so good over all these years.

Paul Gockel

Left: These horribly rusty, used joints have about as much clearance as a modern, never-been-used universal joint. I have no explanation for it. Old shaft already removed from right joint while left joint awaits same procedure.

**100 PLUS
YEAR OLD**

DISAPPEARING PROPELLER BOATS

Murray Walker's 1918 Boat

About 20 year ago, I acquired a 1918 John Bull model Dispro from Joyce and Tom Nuff of Michigan. I had heard through the wooden boat grapevine that the Nuff's had acquired a very early John Bull so made them an offer which was accepted. This un-named boat was added to my boathouse along with other wooden boats in my collection.

This is an original John Bull model, so original that it still bears the original Dippy decals (with propeller spelled the correct way). That is the word propeller is spelled as 'propellor' not 'propeller' as it is spelled today.



We use the boat locally for short cruises on Lake Muskoka. One of our more memorable adventures was a trip with one other couple when the engine quit. We were 25 yards from a dock with two lovely young ladies suntanning in micro bikinis. They agreed to tow the four of us home behind their Yamaha Wave Runner . . . yes, the kind that squirts water! I held the tow rope in the bow of the Dippy but missed

the view as the tow boat squirted blinding water in my face for the entire trip. The other passengers were kept busy steering, pumping and laughing at me.

When the Dispro Owner's Association created a large exhibit about Disappearing Propeller Boats at the Muskoka Discovery Centre in Gravenhurst in 2008, my boat was the feature boat. It demonstrated one of the earliest boats built at the Disappearing Propellor Boat factory in Port Carling.

Owning a 100-year old boat means preserve, preserve, preserve and I hope that someone in the future appreciates and uses the boat.

Murray Walker
DOA Member

Joe Fossey: Here From The Beginning

To playfully paraphrase the words of a world famous author and to offer apologies to Kenneth Grahame's *Wind in the Willows* writing, "It seems that nothing, absolutely nothing is quite half so much fun as simply messing about in a Dispro".

This is the opening to a detailed history of the Dispro Owners Association that founding member Joe Fossey wrote and revised in 2012. What follows is an excerpted version with some current thoughts from Joe, who also filled the shoes of inaugural President from 1979-1980 and a second term from 1980 – 1981. Thankfully, he also took on the role of Archivist, preserving DOA and Dispro historical materials which Mary Storey continues to gather and protect.

Joe's first involvement with a Dispro boat began in 1950 at his wife Irene's family summer cottage on Southern Georgian Bay. There was a local resident and commercial fisherman living there who used his Dispro daily to service his licensed Georgian Bay gill net fishery in all kinds of weather during the fishing seasons.

Having a few rides in that small boat in rough Georgian Bay waters was definitely an experience to remember, but Joe quite liked the little copper jacket motor and was fascinated with the idea behind the Disappearing Propeller "Device". In 1976, Irene saw an ad for a Dispro boat. They went to look at it and sitting in the owner's basement in many pieces and in need of restoration was Greavette Dispro #45-10. They purchased it for \$650, brought it home to Barrie, and named it "Margie". It is difficult to believe, Joe contends, but they have owned and saved eight other Dispros since then.

They innocently thought that they had just purchased the only Dispro boat left in the world, but Port Carling marine friends made short work of that idea. They then started searching for and recording other Dispro boat owners' names that were seen or heard of.

In 1977, at an event in Gravenhurst Joe met Jim Smith of Toronto who was also searching for a Dispro and keeping records of owners and enthusiasts. They agreed to meet and combine lists in the hope of promoting a future meeting.

The opportunity to submit an article on Dispro history to *Antique Boat Magazine* was the beginning of getting the 'Dispro Message' out internationally and hearing from many Dispro owners in America.

During the next year, Jim and Joe combined their lists of Dispro owners and sightings and organized a meeting in Barrie on Sunday April 29, 1979 with 29 people signing up as members. Joe even designed and presented the club logo at this event. This successful meeting was followed by an equally rewarding first Regatta held at Pinelands Lodge on Lake Joseph.

Joe emphasized that the club was for people of all walks of life and every attempt was made to keep costs down as far as possible. He feels that the UUMMTs meet that criteria. "Not everyone can afford a \$1000 weekend".

The inherent nature of Dippies and the need for DIY skills, led to the introduction of Fall Workshops, a logical progression of the informal sharing of advice between more experienced and newer members. Joe's lengthy career as a service rep for Chrysler Marine Products provided an excellent background for setting up these sessions. Joe made detailed notes with diagrams which he referred to as "service school notes" to be handed out, something for the participants later reference. These technical notes set the standard for future presentations.

In 1983, Joe, along with the other authors, was once again instrumental in an important milestone for the club with the publishing of the "The Greatest Little Motor Boat Afloat".

Joe continues to act progressively as times change by providing advice to help with the first electric motor installation in a newly built Dippy, saying "Electric motors are a sign of the future."

At one time, he even turned down an offer of \$25,000 for "Margie", but is now looking for a new home for her.

When asked what advice he would give the club, Joe thoughtfully responded, "Everything as time went on changed the club for the better." "Carry on" is his recommendation.

Because of Joe's passion, generosity and expertise DOA now celebrates 42 years of events and memories surrounding this wonderful boat.

Karen Boyer

Social Distance Boating

The 1985 song by Billy Ocean says, "When the going gets tough, the tough get going". This might apply to the activities in this article. During the restrictions of the pandemic, we needed to find alternate ways to have fun.

When the pandemic lockdown happened, many of us could not wait for spring and the approaching boating season. After the lakes lost their ice and it was warm enough to be outside, there were a few more weeks before those who do not live on the water could use their boats. Many marinas and municipal launch ramps were closed.

For those of us who live on the water, it was a race to see who'd be the first to launch their boat. What a feeling of freedom! However, we still missed going boating with our friends.

A simple email solved that problem. When asked if others were interested in bringing their Dispros to a launch ramp for a half day or even a full day of boating, there was an immediate positive response. This is physical distancing at its best. Each couple launches their boat, travels with two in their boat and loads their own boat back on the trailer. This is like an unofficial, unofficial UUMMT.

For our first adventure, boating from Port Carling, through the lock into Lake Rosseau, on to Port Sandfield, north in Lake Joseph, through the Joe River and back to Port Carling provided lots of boating and a look at the three biggest lakes in Muskoka.

A very, hot June day saw us circumvent Skeleton Lake. Do you remember from a long ago UUMMT, that crystal clear lake that seemed bottomless? Lunch at the Skeleton Lake Fish Hatchery park provided some shade and a break.

continued . . .



While on nearby Loon and Turtle lakes, we heard a cottage yell, “Thanks for bringing your boats to our lake.” These smaller lakes, close to Gravenhurst, provided a full afternoon of boating.

Members who enjoyed the UUMMT at Point au Baril have always talked about it with such enthusiasm. Consequently, the inviting email resulted in five boats following the same route. Fantastic scenery, attention to navigation markers and our picnic lunch at the Ojibway Hotel were highlights.

Although shaped like a giant ‘H’, Muldrew Lake provided a full day of boating and also a dock for lunch at a certain executive member’s cottage. Another day saw us launch at the south end of Sparrow Lake, travel east on the Severn River, under Highway #11 to Wasdell Falls and back.

Ahmik Lake at Magnetawan had us boating for several hours and we did not circumvent the complete lake. A stop at a fellow DOA member’s dock provided a social distanced visit with friends. We marvelled at the different architecture of the cottages compared to those in Muskoka.

It was a good idea that I saved all those charts from UUMMTs over the years; they came in very useful this summer.

Mary Storey

eDisPro 1

“I want my kids to be able to get in it and go without having to take a Mechanic.” Brad Jackson. Isn’t that what we all want? For our kids and ourselves?

By way of introduction, Brad and Karen Jackson are new members who have a life long interest in boats and boating. In addition, Brad is a retired Millwright and a very energetic guy with a warm, dry and well equipped workshop. They recently purchased a 1928 Lindsay Sport Special, in need of work, with the goal to restore and upgrade it from the Caron to an Electric Yacht 3.6Kw motor and controls plus three 12 volt lithium ion batteries for 36 volt power. His only concern at this point is that he may be done before spring and be left with nothing else to do.... We plan to keep track of progress and report further in upcoming issues.

I believe this will be the fifth electric DisPro in the fleet and most significantly the first conversion, from gasoline power to pure electric. The other four are owned by; Phil & Nancy Boyer, Robert & Shirley Parker, Jim & Mary Rockett and Terry & Helen Wolnik, details as follows:

From the last issue you will be well aware of the Wolnik’s 18.5’ boat which uses an 5Kw Electric Yacht motor and controls powered by 4-12 volt AGM (absorbed glass mat) batteries.

The Boyer’s boat is an 18.5’ fibreglass/cedar strip built hull from the offsets in the Greatest Little Motorboat book and uses a Torqueedo Cruise 2.0 Kw drive and controls. He has 4-6 volt deep cycle lead acid batteries and 4 canopy roof mounted solar panels. The boat is equipped with an onboard charger but normally operates without ‘shore charging’!

The Parker’s boat is an 18.5’ fibreglass hull Robert ‘pulled’ from Peter Phelp’s mold of a 1947 Greavette and finished with traditional decks, gunnels and furniture also by Robert. He uses a 1HP Elco 24 volt motor and control system with 4-12 volt gel cell batteries.

The Rockett’s 16.5’ boat was built from the original factory plans for the Waterford model by Mark Harwood with an eye to authenticity, the biggest difference is the planking. He used a building technique called epoxy lapstrake, where the plywood planks are continuously glued with epoxy in lieu of nails. Its uses a 4KW 48Volt permanent magnet brushless motor and controls from ThunderStruck powered by four 12 volt deep cycle sealed lead acid marine batteries.

The Jackson’s project started six weeks or so ago with the concept and the Sport Special in the shop in a mostly complete but rough condition, sound familiar? When I first saw it, it had been stripped of everything on the inside but the decks and gunwales were left intact and the hull had been braced to maintain its shape. It looked liked the boat had seen lots of use, and some questionable maintenance/refits. By my second visit the hull was inverted, sitting square and true, with much of the questionable carpentry addressed, including several planks and re enforcement of the keel and related structure around the device opening.

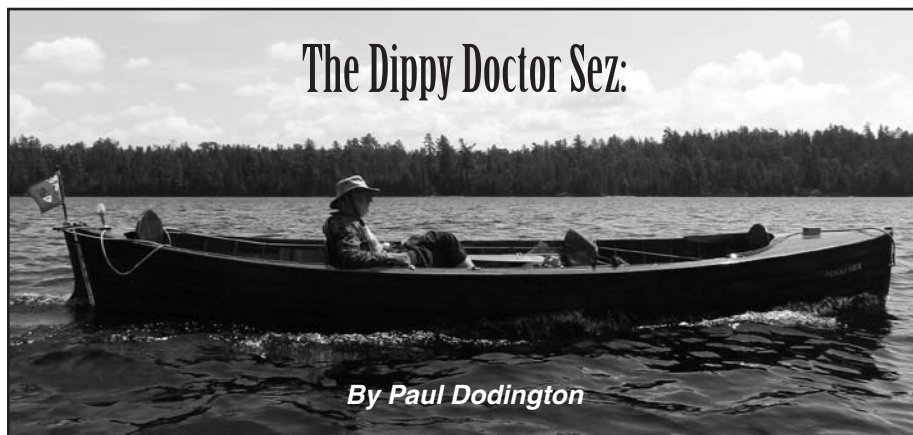
Today it was back upright on custom built dollies and a solid straight support under the keel. The deck and gunnel wood work was complete. The interior wood work has been bleached to remove the worst stains and is being sanded in preparation for finish! Next step is to reinstall the interior; supports for the floors, seat and motor frames and the Sport Special’s longitudinal stiffeners which run most of the length of the hull. I helped Brad temporarily place the device and motor on the original motor boards and stringers so Brad can envisage the modifications required to mount the electric motor.



Some discussion took place, as is normal between the Millwright and the damn Engineer. I came home to study and write while Brad was heading to the hot tub with a beer or two. I am pretty sure he will have the problem resolved before he gets out...

Stay tuned, more to follow.

Kerry Harmon



Part 3: Checking Ignition

There are 2 types of ignition found on Dippy engines:

1. Vibrator or buzz coil powered by a 6 or 12 volt battery
2. Magneto, found on Coventry Victor powered boats.

Vibrator coil ignition is the standard system used on nearly all pre-1952 boats. It is more primitive historically, as it was designed at a time when high engine RPMs were unheard of, but it can be very dependable if well-maintained and kept reasonably dry. A useful feature of this type of ignition is that it makes noise. (Here we are, using our senses again!) If you can hear the buzz, your system is **probably** working O.K. (but not necessarily!)

To check for spark on a vibrator coil system, shut the ignition switch off, remove spark plug, re-attach wire, and ground the shell of the plug to the engine by laying it on the copper water jacket or cylinder head, being very careful not to accidentally ground the top end of the plug where the wire attaches. Then turn the fly wheel until the timer makes contact. Switch on ignition and listen for the buzz. You should also see a nice blue spark jumping the gap between the spark plug electrodes, although this can be difficult to see in bright sunlight. (Two of your senses at work simultaneously for this test!) If there is no buzz, rock the flywheel a few degrees forward and backward to be sure that you have found the timer contact.

If the coil still fails to buzz, here's a checklist of possible problems:

1. Open primary circuit caused by a broken or disconnected wire at battery, timer, or coil.
2. Open circuit due to dirty or corroded coil points.
3. Ignition switch not making proper contact.
4. Poor contact at timer, especially at reversing switch on copper jacket engines.
5. Weak or dead battery (anything less than 6 volts is no good.)
6. Defective coil.
7. Damp coil – coils must be perfectly dry.

A small pocket multimeter is a handy item to use for checking continuity of circuits using either the volts scale or the ohms scale.

You should always carry a spare vibrator coil that you know to be in good condition and keep it in a sealed plastic bag or container where it will never be exposed to moisture. There is nothing better than parts substitution when a coil is suspected of being questionable!

Most of the earlier-model Dippies that don't have such modern amenities like electric starting were originally equipped with dry cell batteries. Originally, #6 telephone cells were used, later the 'Hot Shot' 6 volt batteries were preferred, as they contained 4 of the telephone batteries in one sealed container. The late Port Carling and early Lindsay DPs used larger 'Hot Shots' of 7 1/2 to 9 volt capability and when these became unobtainable about 30 years ago, 6 volt alkaline lantern batteries became the preferred power source. These were by far the best batteries ever to be used in these boats in my estimation. Once installed, they could remain undisturbed in situ for several years without any attention whatever, and they never needed recharging. An added benefit was that when they did finally expire (one of mine is still going strong after 14 years) they'd give you plenty of notice before rigor mortis finally set in.

Well, as they say, they don't make 'em like they used to and now we are faced with finding yet another substitute. Some of our members have reported satisfactory results from small sealed 12 volt motorcycle or alarm batteries, and as my Duracells eventually die, as they must, I'll be fitting my 3 Port Carling Dippies with these sealed units which thankfully are fairly similar in dimension to the old alkaline lantern batteries, so that no major surgery is required to fit them into the original battery boxes.

There are always drawbacks, though. These new batteries require regular recharging, and the chargers are not inexpensive. You also need to change the terminals on your battery wires to suit the spade connectors.

If your Dippy is equipped with electric starting (this first appeared around the beginning of W.W.2 on some Greavettes with the Tillcock-modified E1 copper jacket engines as an option) you have probably already learned that a weak storage battery which cannot properly crank the engine, may still be adequate for ignition. Therefore, if the starting motor will crank the engine, the battery will be adequate for ignition. Use the same procedure used on non-starter engines – spark plug lying on cylinder head, but use starter to revolve the flywheel.

Safety note: If you have been cranking the engine unsuccessfully before removing the plug to check for spark, remember that the now-open combustion chamber is probably charged with an explosive gas mixture. Any spark in the vicinity of the open spark plug hole may set it off, so take care, especially in a boathouse or garage.

Magneto ignition as found on Coventry Victor engines is very different from the earlier coil and battery systems. The storage battery in these boats does not operate the ignition system at all, except to revolve the flywheel, thereby starting up the magneto. A magneto begins to self-generate power as soon as its armature is rotated, and once started up, has to be stopped by some means.

So how do you stop a magneto-powered engine? Well, you can shut off the gas to the carburetor, and the engine will stop eventually when it runs out of fuel. But the normal way of shutting of a magneto is with an ignition switch. Most people do not understand what they are doing when they "shut off" the ignition on a magneto because it is totally opposite to what you would expect.

What you're actually doing when you stop a Coventry Victor engine is turning the switch to the "on" position which creates an alternate path, in other words, a short circuit which "kills" the magneto. The engine stops right away because the spark plugs no longer receive any "juice" from the mag. Conversely, when you want to start the engine, you "open" the switch which removes the short circuit. Some folks have asked why the ignition key can't be removed from most Greavettes when it is turned "off". Well, there's the reason. Most of these switches were designed for battery ignition, not magneto. Just remember that the switch is "on" when it is off and "off" when it is on. Just another of those strange Dippy peculiarities!

continued . . .

While we're on the subject of ignition switches I'd like to remind all Coventry Victor owners that you should never, ever, connect any "hot" wires from the battery to the ignition switch. I've seen this done on several boats, and the result is always the same: a burned-out magneto and a very expensive repair bill, if not a total loss by fire. So remember: the ignition switch's only function is to ground out the magneto. Nothing else!

Because a magneto only produces a spark when it is rotating, checking for spark is more difficult on a Coventry. You need to check that both plugs are sparking, which means that you'll have to engage the electric starting motor. This engagement causes the engine to "jerk" which usually knocks one, or both plugs off the cylinder where you have so carefully placed them, leaving them dangling from their wires. This is bad for 2 reasons: 1. Unless the shell of the plug is making good contact with the engine it won't spark, and 2. It can be very damaging to the magneto armature if the high voltage generated in the system can't get to ground when the plug falls off. This damage may not be immediate, but may show up weeks or months later. That's why you should never rotate a C.V. magneto with the spark plug wires disconnected, even once. The excessive voltage build-up can destroy the electrical insulation in the magneto armature. So the bottom line here is: fasten the plug body to one of the copper water pipes with a twist-tie or elastic band to make absolute sure that there is a good metal-to-metal contact before cranking the engine.

A no-spark situation in a C.V. engine, particularly after the boat has been laid up for several months over winter, is usually due to dirty or oxidized interrupter points in the mag. These should be cleaned very carefully at the beginning of the boating season for best performance.

Finally, a word about spark plugs. They rarely fail, but they do get carboned up on the business end, and should be cleaned regularly with a toothbrush and gasoline. Coventry Victors are notorious for fouled spark plugs. This is usually caused by too much oil in the crankcase which gets thrown all over the internal parts of the engine by the counterweights on the crankshaft. If you experience this problem, try draining out all the oil and put only 850 ml back in. The dipsticks on these engines are next to useless and give false readings. This seems to correct the number 1 cause of fouled plugs on these engines.

The presence of carbon on a spark plug sometimes just bleeds off a percentage of the spark, not always all of it, so the plug may appear to be working, but not at full intensity. Plug electrode gaps are critical, too; although once set, they rarely change. Anytime you install a new plug, the gap should be checked especially on a Coventry Victor where the gap should be set at .022". Anything larger than that may eventually damage the magneto armature.

Next time: Fuel System Troubles



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