

EDINA MODEL YACHT CLUB

SAIL & SCALE NEWSLETTER

JUNE 2013

VOLUME 22, NUMBER 6

100 Years of Larson Boats

Compiled By Todd Moen

I have spent my entire life in Minnesota, and living in Bemidji for the first part of my life gave me the opportunity to see many Larson fishing boats and pleasure boats during these years. These

memories inspired me to compile an article about the Minnesota history of Larson boats on their 100th Anniversary.

Paul Larson, at the age of 11, made his first boat, a fishing skow, out of scrap lumber from the family farm and rusty nails from a burned down house .

In 1913, Paul sketched a design for a duck hunting boat.

Because of the demand for him to build boats for his friends and neighbors while he was still a teenager, Paul became a very successful businessman. With money from trapping, Paul bought his first woodworking machine and founded Larson boat works in 1913 in Little Falls, Minnesota on the Mississippi River. As one-cylinder outboards became popular, his business grew, serving the lake cabin dwellers on nearby Lake Alexander.

Paul Larson became the first Johnson Outboard Motor dealer in Minnesota in 1922. To handle growing demand, a new boat factory was under construction by mid-decade. In

(Continued on Page 4)



A fully restored 1941 "Falls Flyer"

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS:

Open Boating every Tuesday and Thursday 5:00 - 9:00 p.m. & every Sunday 4:30 - 9:00 p.m.

June 9, Sunday	9:00 a.m- 5:00 p.m.	Parade Of Boats Event
June 15, Saturday	10:00 a.m.-9:00 p.m	Summerfest Event - Long Lake, Minn.
June 18, Tuesday	7:00 p.m- 9:00 p.m.	Membership Meeting
June 27, Thursday	6:30 p.m- 9:00 p.m.	The Draw Event - Ramsey, Minn.

COMMODORE'S CORNER



By Wayne Snyder

Well May was surely a lusty month this year. Lots of rain and cold days so boating was less than usual and as I write this May is leaving with another round of rain and severe weather, hopefully June will be better. Speaking of June, it is probably our most active month with the Parade of Boats and Ramsey in the same month. Thanks to Captain Dave Robb our May meeting was very interesting with his presentation of the accident in Detroit. Show and tell is my favorite time of our meetings so keep the projects coming and show what you are doing. With all of the members who usually help the Parade should be a great time again this year. Hopefully the weather will be 75 degrees with a nice breeze out of the South for sailing and no rain. How's that for a weather forecast!? The June meeting will be mostly a recap of the POB event so if you see something that could be improved or some activity that would fit bring your idea to the meeting - Wayne Snyder , EMYC Commodore

Special Thanks...To members that contributed their time & talents to this issue: John Bertelsen, Dale Johnson & Wayne Snyder.

Thank You to David S. Holman's law office for free newsletter printing.. David specializes in Estate planning, Business, Real Estate & Creditor Representation, located in Burnsville, Minnesota.

RICHFIELD
612-866-9575

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651-490-1675



OPEN...MON-FRI, 10:00-9:00...SAT, 9:30-5:30.SUN, 12:00-5:00

**SHOW YOUR EMYC CLUB CARD AND RECEIVE
10% OFF ON ALL NON-DISCOUNTED ITEMS!**

Richfield
6416 Penn Ave. S.
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(1 blk S of LUNDS)



Little Canada
82 Minnesota Ave.
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Batten down the hatches!

Sunday June 9: Parade of Boats
Saturday June 15: Summerfest

Bring your boats to Long Lake if you dare!
10am 'till Fireworks

CONTROL FREAKS R/E

NAUTICAL KNOW-IT-ALL - BOAT IDENTIFICATION By Evan Ruud

For June, match the vintage boat model name in the left column to its Manufacturer in the right column

- | | |
|------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. (1957) Monterey | ___ Crestliner, Inc. |
| 2. (1957) Samoan | ___ Wizard Boats, Inc. |
| 3. (1956) Catalina | ___ Larson Boat Works, Inc. |
| 4. (1958) Ocelot | ___ Orlando Boat Company |
| 5. (1959) Falls Flyer | ___ Power Cat Boat Company |
| 6. (1956) Vagabond | ___ Yellow Jacket |
| 7. (1959) Barracuda | ___ Atlanta Boat Works |
| 8. (1960) 175 Sea Lion | ___ Blue Lake Boats |
| 9. (1960) Baronet 18 | ___ South Sea Boat Company |
| 10. (1960) Funliner 17 | ___ Beachcraft Boat Company |
| 11. (1960) Zepher | ___ Crestliner, Inc. |
| 12. (1964) Sea Scout | ___ John Almond Boats, Inc. |
| 13. (1964) Del Rio | ___ Magnolia Boat Company |
| 14. (1964) Wildcat | ___ Crosby Aqua Marine |
| 15. (1964) Saratoga | ___ Larson Boat Works, Inc. |

ANSWERS TO MAY'S KNOW-IT-ALL QUESTION



The *Boeing 307 Stratoliner* built in the late 1930s was the first commercial airliner prepressurized to fly above the weather (20,000 feet). Only 10 were produced and these flew with few operators-among them Howard Hughes's Trans World Airlines. Hughes acquired his personal *Boeing 307 Stratoliner* in 1939. In 1948 Raymond Loewy was commissioned to convert the interior of Hughes's aircraft into an executive office. In March 1949, Hughes sold his office on wings to Houston oil man Glenn McCarthy, the inspiration for the character Jett Rink in the 1956 movie *Giant*. McCarthy in turn sold the *Stratoliner*, which he

called *The Shamrock*, in 1962 to Florida Jet Research in Fort Lauderdale. In 1964 Hurricane Cleo clobbered Fort Lauderdale and the *Stratoliner*, (then called *The Flying Penthouse*) and sustained severe tail and landing gear damage. Fort Lauderdale realtor and pilot Kenneth W. London attempted to restore the aircraft after purchasing it in 1969. Regrettably, the aircraft was too damaged to become airworthy again, so London converted it into a motoring yacht. In June 1974 the completed floating aircraft, nicknamed *The Londonaire* graced the waterways of South Florida. In 1981, David Drimmer purchased *The Londonaire* to be used as his own personal houseboat. Jimmy Buffett was so struck by the uniqueness of this vessel that he featured it in his 1992 novel, *Where Is Joe Merchant?* as the *Cosmic Muffin*. Drimmer renamed his unique vehicle in a tribute to its newly acquired literary status.

100 Years of Larson Boats (cont.)



Interior of the 1941 "Falls Flyer"



The 1956 Larson "All American"



The 1958 Larson "Falls Flyer"



The 1960 Larson "Surfmaster"

his spare time, Paul became an avid boat racer. He won enough races to have a fine collection of trophies and acclaim for his growing company. In March of 1922, Paul Larson and friend Sherman Levis joined a group of sports-persons on a 150 miles dog sled trek through northern Minnesota. Amongst the team were State Game and Fish Commissioner Jay Gould and a few wardens. He struck up a friendship with the wardens and this resulted in Paul selling a few boats to them for use in their assignments. Paul designed a special lightweight vessel he called the "Game Warden Special" for them. Constructed of cedar strip planking over white oak ribs, she was covered with canvas below the waterline. Many years later he commented that it was some of the best advertising he could ever have dreamed up.

By 1927, Paul was a very established employer in the Little Falls area. His company was building several hundreds of hand-made wooden boats each year.

In 1927, Paul witnessed a very famous aviation voyage of a good friend and neighbor who flew across the Atlantic Ocean to Le Bourget Air Field in Paris. This aviator was of course was Charles Lindbergh. Paul Larson was so deeply impressed with Lindy's achievement, that he honored him by incorporating Lindy's profession and his hometown of Little Falls and introducing a new line of boats called the "Falls Flyer".

Through the early years leading up to his famous trek, Lindbergh was an aviation barnstormer and mail carrier with the use of a Curtiss biplane model JN4, named the "Jenny".

In 1937, the production of the Falls Flyer was in full swing. The Flyer's design incorporated many features of Lindy's Curtiss biplane - a rounded hull boat with a double cockpit built out of canvass and wood. The original prototype of the Falls Flyer merged port and starboard cutwaters at the bow in the form of a metal eagle handlift. This was a unmistakable homage to Lindy, the "Lone Eagle".

Paul Larson was seriously injured in a crash during a race at Red Wing, Minnesota on August 24 1929. His boat was named the "Spirit of 770" and was sponsored by the local Elks Lodge No. 770.

The stock market crash of October 1929 affected Larson Boats. Paul had to obtain a \$1,000.00 loan to survive through the hard years of the Great Depression.

After the Depression, Larson boat manufacturing kept a steady pace, because of the demand for fishing boats. Paul was

100 Years of Larson Boats (cont.)

a visionary in his own rite, he kept an open mind and watched the changing consumer trends of boating very carefully.

By the end of the 1930's, Paul had doubled the size of his company. Distribution of his boats expanded beyond the boundaries of Little Falls as a network of boat dealers grew.

The 3,000th Larson boat was built in January, 1939 when the firm had twenty woodworkers on the payroll. Over the company's first 26 years, this averaged to 115 boats annually. Contrast this to Thompson Brothers Boat that was building over 2,000 boats each year during the same period.

Pleasure boat manufacturing at Larson Boats came to a grinding halt during WWII. Many of the materials that Paul used were diverted to wartime uses and not available. Prices and wages were frozen, and gas rationing was crippling the pleasure boat market. In 1942, a Sailboat was briefly introduced and manufactured as a pleasure boat that did not require gasoline. This was known as the 1942 "Lone Eagle" Sail Boat. Fortunately, the U.S. government recognized Larson's unique boat manufacturing capabilities and awarded the company with wartime contracts.

During the war, Larson kept its workers busy producing 26-foot wooden drill boats for the Coast Guard. These boats were equipped with 12 and 16 foot ash oars.

Larson also made inboard boats that patrolled the lower Mississippi near New Orleans. The company also built beer cases for the Minneapolis Brewing Company. This manufacturing was allowed in spite of the rationing because, through the wisdom of the government, beer was classified as a food source.

After the war, Paul Larson became fascinated by aluminum as a result of the airline industry making great strides in using this lightweight material. An abundance of post-war workers with aluminum experience were also available. Larson designed his prototypes out of large sheets of fir plywood and used this to help shape the aluminum. Larson Watercraft couldn't keep up with the demand for these boats, so company stock was sold to expand the production, and Paul Larson sold his majority holding.

The name of the company was changed from Larson Watercraft to Crestliner - a name that lives on to this day.

Disaster struck in December 1949 when fire demolished the entire Larson facility. It was a total loss with forms; inventory; equipment; and records being destroyed. Sadly, one dedicated



A 1967 Larson Runabout



1969 "Lapline All American"

Larson employee was lost in the fire; night watchman Jake Ringwelski. He went back into the burning building several times in an attempt to save materials. The factory was ultimately rebuilt on the same spot. The fire did not affect the Larson Watercraft plant, adjacent to the main Larson Boat Works facility.

The destruction of records lends to the mystery of the early era of Larson Boat Works. Very little is known of early models, employees, and production statistics.

In 1953 the company offered a fiberglass coating on the bottom of several of their strip built models as an option. They called it "armorglass."

The new Laker Line of fiberglass boats soon came to dominate their out-

100 Years of Larson Boats (cont.)



1990 Larson 300 "Contempra"



2007 Larson Cabrio 370

put and Larson emerged as a hot national brand name. In the 1950s, Larson introduced numerous flamboyant new designs, including the Cruisemaster, the Pla-Boy, and the Thunderhawk - a two-toned streak with a swooping sheerline and trademark tailfins. Larson also launched the fiberglass All-American line, undoubtedly the largest selling runabout model ever produced in the world. Although Larson stopped making the All-American in the 1990s, the memories it created for thousands of families will live forever. With its open rear cockpit and flat floor, the first 16-foot, fiberglass Larson All-American suggested the recreational roominess of today's popular deck boats.

In 1954 the Falls Flyer was made out of fiberglass. It had a molded seamless hull and the floatation chambers were

carefully designed to reinforce the hull. The windshield base was molded in to incorporate the wrap-around Plexiglas windshield.

By 1957 when the company was incorporated, ninety percent of their production was in fiberglass. Sales were increasing in the decade and additional financing was needed to help build more production space. A local industrial development corporation was established to sell shares to raise capital for Larson. They built a new plant on the west side of the Mississippi River in 1958-59.

Larson was one of the first fiberglass boat builders to use the patented Rand chopper gun fiberglass spray method of building up hull thickness. There were 300 workers at the Little Falls plant by 1959. Larson Boats were being built at Ontario, California; Nashville, Georgia; Casper, Wyoming; and Cornwall, Ontario, Canada under various licensing agreements with other builders. A nation-wide dealer network was well established by that time.

In the 1960's decade, the Larson All-American line was expanded, and several new hulls were introduced, including the lapline hull with its cushiony "Million-Bubble Ride," the deep V lapline, and the tri-hull. New to the lineup was the Sea-Lion, a 17'-8" model available as either a convertible runabout or a flying bridge cruiser. This was a big water model with a chine that was beginning to square off the round chine that was such an identity with the early Thunderhawks, Pla-boys, and All-Americans. Sales went beyond all projections set by Larson management.

By 1969, Larson was the largest fiberglass runabout manufacturer in the world. The boom in the pleasure boat market, and Paul Larson's retirement, led the company into also manufacturing skis, hockey sticks, snowmobiles, travel trailers, even pool tables and other home entertainment equipment.

In the 1970s, Larson held onto its position in the marine market. The new Cruiser Home featured a styled hardtop. A 1972 day cruiser listed an 8-track stereo tape cartridge player as optional equipment. The biggest 1972 Larson boat of all was the Volero 217 a 21.42 foot inboard/outboard boat.

In the 1980's the Delta-Conic hull was a dream come true for cruise boating. It had a deep-V forward section for sharp entry into rough waters. But its aft area had two large, delta-

100 Years of Larson Boats (cont.)

shaped sections for fast planing performance and greater stability. The new Delta-Conic line of cruisers, outboards, and runabouts meant record-breaking sales year in 1985. Larson boats continued production of the All-American, and introduced more trailerable cruisers, sportabouts, and an expanded line of runabouts, including the high-style Senza V-hull series. Larson reached a further milestone with its first wide-body, nontrailerable cruiser, the 30-foot Contempra.

Paul Larson passed on at the age of 89 in Little Falls on January 20, 1983. Larson boats was purchased by Minnesota investor Irwin Jacobs, and joined a conglomerate that became Genmar Industries.

Large Cabrio cruisers were added to the line in 1991. New Escapade day cruisers were equipped for entertaining dockside or while underway. The SEi outboard boats were created as serious performance runabouts. The Larson LXi runabout series, was billed as "the lap of luxury." Of course, it also featured the get-up-and-go built into every Larson boat.

In the year 2000, Larson began producing boats using a revolutionary new fiberglass technology. It's called VEC™. And its innovative, closed-mold approach results in boats built all in one piece - for a fiberglass part that's consistent and uniform throughout. Larson boats made using the VEC process are more durable, perform better, look better, and hold their value better.

Now owned by Genmar Industries (which also owns Hatteras, Wellcraft and Carver, among others), Larson today builds a diverse line of affordably priced ski boats, deckboats, and family cruisers from 18 to 37 feet in length.

-Article Compiled By Todd Moen

You are invited to join Control Freaks RC at Summerfest on Saturday June 15! We will be on Long Lake from 10am until the fireworks. We launch from a sandy beach and relax in the grassy park. Boats for show or sailing draw tremendous attention. Last year, EMYC made the event quite spectacular, and we would love to share the day with you again! The earlier you arrive, the easier it will be to unload your boats. Any questions please call John at 504-450-1466. Thank you for all the joy your club brings to our communities! - Control Freaks RC 2365 W Wayzata Blvd Long Lake, 55356



Photo Taken By Todd Moen at Summerfest 2012

At the May EMYC Meeting

Captain David Robb presented a video of the recent Detroit drawbridge accident involving the 670 foot Herbert C. Jackson which was carrying 23,000 tons of iron ore pellets to the Severstal North America plant in Dearborn, Michigan. The

45-year-old intoxicated operator began lowering the drawbridge on the ship while it was passing through on the Rouge River. - Todd Moen



EDINA MODEL YACHT CLUB

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Hughes Pavilion
7499 France Avenue South
Edina, Minnesota 55435
www.emyc.org



JUNE MEETING

TUESDAY, JUNE 18, 2013 7:00 P.M.
CENTENNIAL LAKES GARAGE BAND ROOM

AGENDA:

- Parade Of Boats Wrap-Up Meeting
- Upcoming Events -
 - "The Draw" at Ramsey, Minn.
 - "Picnic At the Pond" at Rick's Hobby Farm
- Pond Boating - Weather Permitting

Special Interest Contacts:

Scale Boating:

To Be Determined (Anybody Interested?)

Sail Boating:

Tony Johnson (952) 470-8818 tjohnson@emyc.org

Fast Electric:

Dan Proulx (763) 551-4953 dproulx@emyc.org

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