

Antique Outboard Club News

Southern California Chapter – Vol. 8 February 2013

Our annual Christmas meet was held at Woody's Diner in Huntington Beach on the first of December. It was great to have a lot of members we haven't seen in a while there. Our member of honor, David Vaughn, was present, and was accompanied by his wonderful wife, Linda and their son, Greg. David has been a club member for at least four decades, and is one, if not the only, the best restorer of vintage motors known. He has donated many of his motors to museums for display, as well as generously given motors to fellow club members to promote the hobby. There were more than fifteen people in attendance at this meet. We look forward to seeing all of them again at our next meet at Puddingstone Lake.



Gee! what's going on back in the kitchen. I know why everyone is smiling.



Interesting article from the January 1989 Antique Outboarder

Sear's Big Kicker

by Peter Hunn

“**Remember!**” warns the instruction manual, “This outboard is much more powerful than a smaller motor. The acceleration of this motor is **extremely** rapid, and it is well to make sure that you have plenty of room in which to maneuver. It is a good idea to become thoroughly familiar with all the controls at moderate speeds **before** running at top speed!”

“Extremely rapid acceleration?” These must be words from an Elto 4-60, Johnson PR, or Evinrude Big Four owner’s booklet. Well, actually, the aforementioned text came from a pamphlet describing a green motor. Perhaps a Mercury KG-9? Nope . . . that warning was supplied to new owners of a Sears ELGIN.



For many an outboarder, the name ELGIN conjures up images of those little, green, nearly indestructable, still operating (albeit missing half of their parts) fishing motors. These are the ones that, although not produced in over 30 years, seem to become much more plentiful with the passing of every multi-family garage sale.

While sporting the same color paint as its smaller mechanical brothers, this articles' ELGIN was produced to help Sears & Roebuck cash in on the outboard motor horsepower/speed craze that was going full throttle in the early-mid 1950's.

Following WWII, the West Bend Aluminum Company of Hartford, Wisconsin was awarded a Sears contract to build a line of ELGIN fishing motors. Based on West Bend's success in manufacturing the small (1.2 - 7½ HP) Elgins for Sears, the giant retailer asked West Bend to design a whole new ELGIN capable of planing a light runabout, and towing young waterskiers (while remaining inexpensive enough to compete with the major brands on price.)

The challenge was met by West Bend's 1950* offering of the ELGIN 16. This full-gearshift twin was unique in a number of ways:

1) **Fiberglass Cover.** In recent Evinrude advertising, the Milwaukee based manufacturer shows a 1959 Evinrude, and states "first fiberglass motor cover." It would seem that ELGIN was earlier with its "special plastic impregnated fiberglass cover." West Bend told Sears that the new cover was 50 % lighter than aluminum, and had 2½ times the impact strength of steel! The sound absorbency from the fiberglass cover was supposed to make the ELGIN 16 the quietest motor in its HP range. The entire cover was held to the motor by a single screw threading into a socket above the flywheel.

2) **Non-traditionally Placed Starter Cord.** The starter knob was located in the lower cowl near the tiller handle. The low position made it easier to yank the cord while sitting down, and eliminated the "tendency of the motor to tilt up when starting."

3) **Generic Fuel Line and Filter.** While each ELGIN 16 came with its own 5.75 gallon fuel tank, it had a generic "mason jar" type cap hooked to the fuel filter and fuel hose. This standard thread top allowed one to unscrew the cap/fuel filter/hose from the ELGIN tank, and insert it in any Eagle brand, or standard gas can. This way, ELGIN 16 owners didn't have to pour fuel from one can to another, or pop extra bucks from a second official ELGIN fuel tank.

Unlike the 16-20 HP rigs of the day (Merc Mark 20, Scott-Atwater 16, Martin "2000"), the big ELGIN exceeded the 20 cubic inch class "B" limit by 4 cubes. Obviously, Sears didn't ask West Bend to come up with a racing/hot rod motor. One can only speculate whether or not a 19.9 cu. in. ELGIN 16 (with some sort of optional racing lower unit), sold inexpensively through the Sears catalog, would have broadened the scope of stock outboard racing

***NOTE:** Although 1954 seems to be the last ELGIN 16 production year (according to various model/year guides), Elgin literature isn't too clear on the big motor's premier. While most sources say 1950 is the engine's first year, some list it in 1949. The first issue of the "Antique Outboarder" features a full-page picture of the 16, and indicates it was introduced in 1952. Sheller's 1960 used motor guide lists 2 models of the 16 in 1951, 2 in 1952, 4 different versions for 1953! and one for 1954. There is a slight weight/price difference between the various models. Perhaps it is the prop option (aluminum or bronze) that makes the models unique? Of course, a leftover Elgin in a Sears store didn't carry the same "time-urgency" as, say, a new 1950 Speeditwin in a 1955 Evinrude showroom. Consequently, some 1950-1954 ELGIN 16 models might have been purchased (and considered by their owners to be "new") in 1956. As Artie Johnson's little German soldier used to say: "Verry interesting, but highly unbeeleevacabul!" Come to think of it, his helmet looked a lot like the top of an ELGIN 16.

The ELGIN 16 was produced from 1950* to 1954, and was priced between \$277 and \$320. During the end of this production run, West Bend decided to market its own line of outboards - The West Bend; A brand that evolved into today's Force motors. Some say the Sears people weren't too happy with such a decision, and subsequently pulled the exclusive West Bend contract and awarded some of its outboard work to McCulloch.

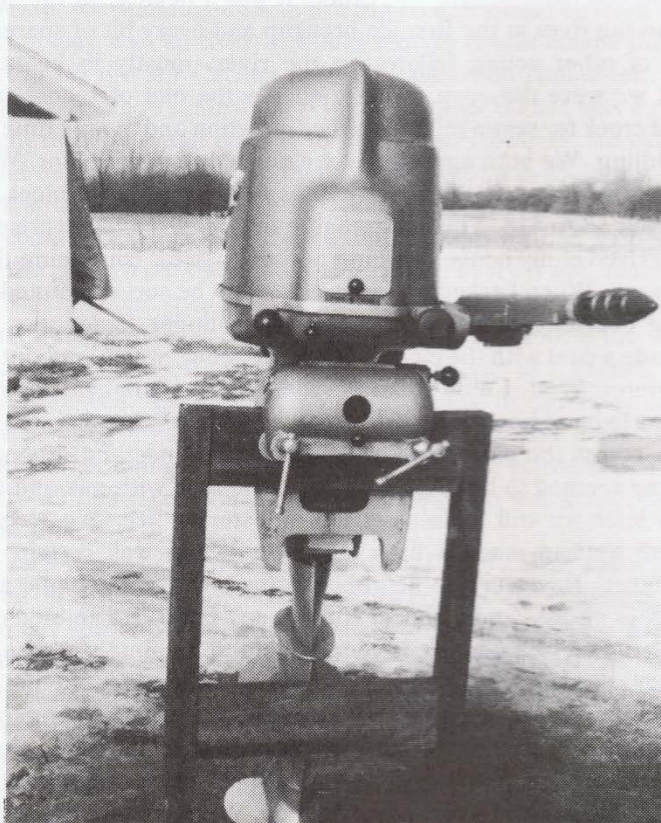
As with any vintage outboard, it is difficult to say just how rare the ELGIN 16 is. I do recall a small group of AOMCI members looking through the motors in the back shop of the Wisconsin marina hosting our 1972 National Meet.

"What have we here? . . . one of those big Elgins?" speculated a veteran member.

Two or three other outboarders confirmed the ID, but each admitted that he never seen a "live" one before.

That Wisconsin, ELGIN 16 had been the only one I'd ever spotted until a summer, or so, ago when I saw a wierd looking motor (lower unit pointing skyward) sticking out of an old wringer washer in an abandoned Vermont scrap heap. It was frozen, its fiberglass cover missing, but I dragged it home anyway.

Not long ago, NY member Doug Penn brought me a very early ELGIN 16 (#86) with an embossed "starting instruction" plate hooked to the transom clamp yoke. It's stuck too, but has its famous fiberglass cover. Unfortunately, someone managed to pull off the ELGIN name plates. And, someone else used red and black magic markers to advertise (across that fiberglass cover) that the outboard was available for "\$10" . . . then "\$7" . . . finally "best offer." Doub indicated that his best offer to the ELGIN owner was probably only marginally better than the seller's contemplation of the effort needed to haul the darn thing back home again. The engine was brought my way as a parts motor for another ELGIN 16 acquired from AOMCI member Art DeKalb.



Can you identify these outboards.....Answers on last page.



#1



#2



#3



#4



#5



#6

Parts wanted : Ron Accomero needs a complete power head for a Elgin model 58302
If you have any leads please email him at ronacco@earthlink.net

The Southern California Chapter sadly announces the passing of long time member Al Jarvis. He died of Pneumonia in January 2013. He met and married his beautiful wife while a student at U.C. Berkley, after World War II. They were the proud parents of four children, and were married for sixty years, they resided in Palos Verdes California. He was a loyal member of the So. Cal. Antique Outboard Club for over 30 years, and meticulously restored dozens of Johnson motors from the 20's, 30's, and 40's. His gentle presence and expertise will be missed by all club members.

Paul Brinkman, Jr.

President of the So . Cal. AOMC



Al Jarvis with just some of his pristine, outboard motors.



Our next meet will be Saturday March ninth, at Puddingstone Lake, at the sail boat ramp. Hosted by Paul Brinkman and Tom Lockwood. Hope to see all of our old friends there.

Answers to outboard quiz; #1 Seaking #2Flambeau #3 Neptune #4 Caille (pronounced cail) #5 Gray (gearless) #6 Eska (made by Power Products) also sold under many brands like- Clinton-Clay-Chief-Apache-Pearless-Corsair etc.