

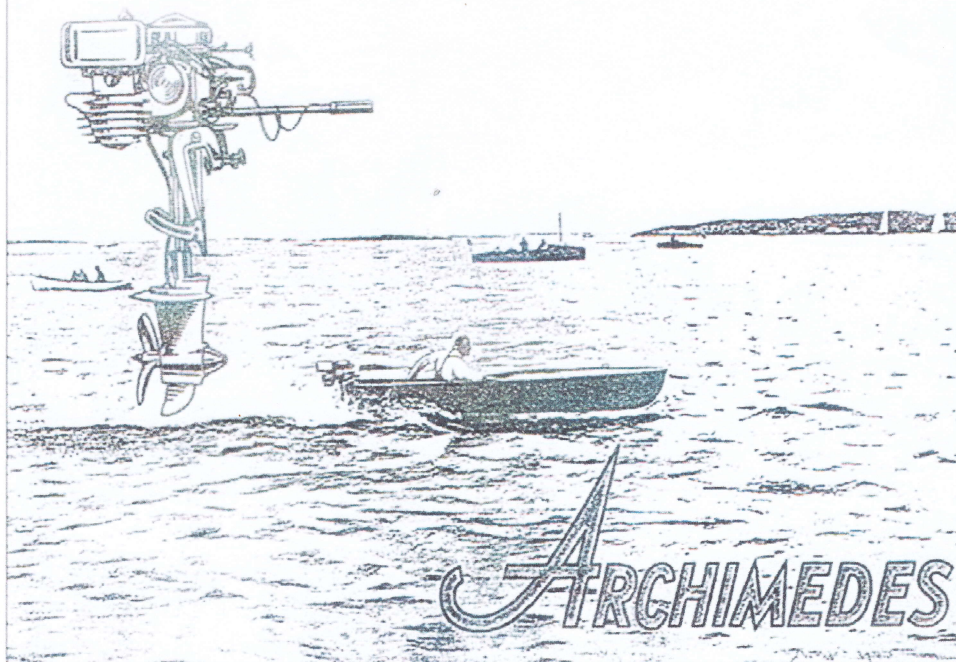
# Antique Outboard Club News

Southern California Chapter – Vol.1

January 2011

Welcome to the new year and the Antique Outboard Newsletter for the Southern California Chapter of the AOMCI. I want to encourage everyone to make suggestions and contribute pictures and articles for future newsletters. You can email them to me at Darryl Webber [ridgedwlr@verizon.net](mailto:ridgedwlr@verizon.net). Any help would certainly be appreciated. Our last meet was held on December 11, 2010 at Lake Elsinore, and we all enjoyed a great turkey meal with all the fixings, compliments of Paul and Marsha Brinkman. George Kent supplied the great sweet potatoes and green beans...thanks George! It was good to see George out and about, as we all missed him at passed meets. Kip Fjeld brought a very old (well it looked old) Archimedes outboard made in Sweden. It's a very rare find in the United States. Good luck on restoring that one, Kip.

## The Archimedes Outboard of Sweden





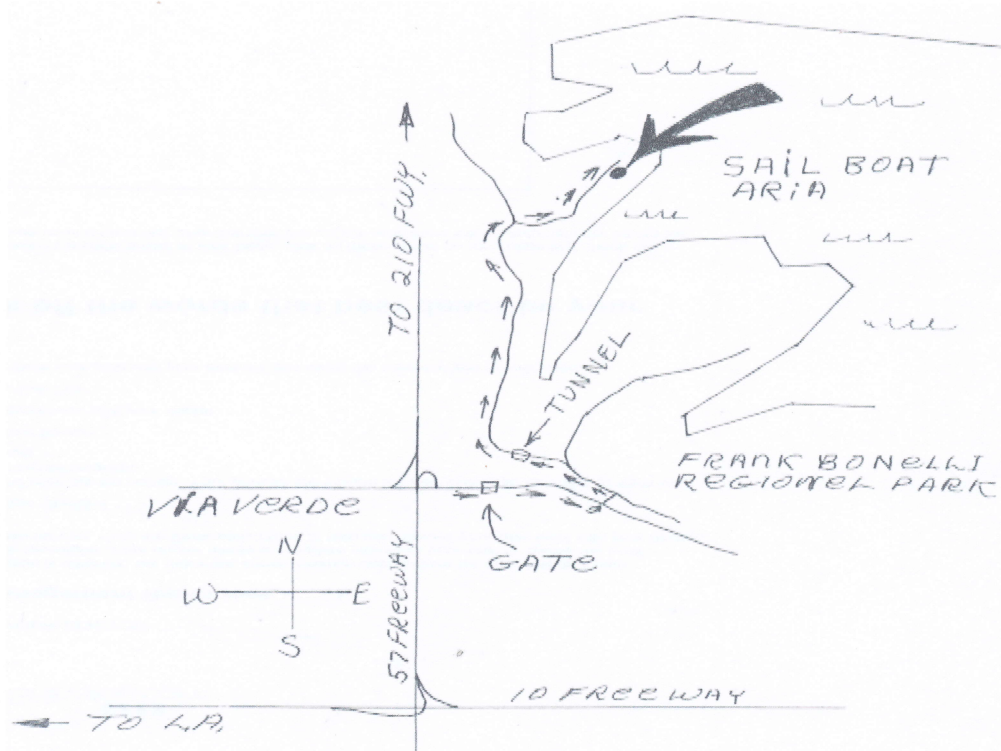
We elected to have four meetings each year and had volunteers sign up to host these meets. The spring meet will be hosted by Darryl Webber at Puddingstone ; the summer meet will be hosted by Dave Marotta in San Diego; the fall meet will be hosted by Frank Fowler (to be determined) and the December meet will be co-hosted by George Kent & Paul Brinkman. We are checking to see if we can make the arrangements, for one meet at Lake Castaic, in the summer time, as there are a lot of people that live in the LA area and north that have stated they would like to see a meet there.



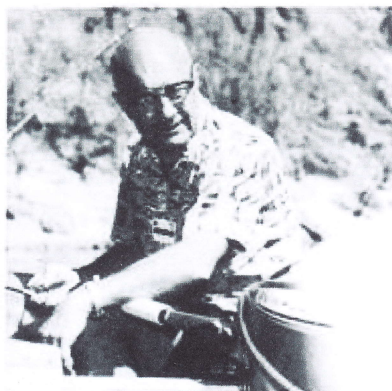
The perpetual trophy for the best outboard went to yours truly, Darryl Webber, and Paul Brinkman had the name plate made for the trophy . Thanks Paul! The trophy will again be up for grabs at the next meet, so dust off all those motors from your garage and bring them to the next meet.



Speaking of our next meet, it will be held April 2, 2011 at Puddingstone Lake in Frank Bonelli Regional Park in La Vern. We will meet at the sail boat ramp area. This is a great place to have everyone brings boats and motors to run and display. We would like everyone to bring at least three or four motors to make the meet more interesting. Below is the map for directions. Any questions, just email me.



The next few pages contain an article I found in an old Antique Outboard Magazine from 1978, written by W.J. Webb. Its about the personal and business life of Ralph Evinrude who formed the Outboard Marine Corporation. I hope you enjoy it as much as I did.



# OF HISTORICAL INTEREST

..... *W J Webb*

Ralph Evinrude, Chairman of the Board, Outboard Marine Corporation

The outboarder was adrift and angry because his outboard motor had quit and he was becoming scared that he might not be able to get ashore before nightfall. Then a big blue and white power yacht hove into sight and he was surprised when it stopped and a friendly, heavy-set fellow came over in its outboard-powered tender and got him started again.

When the man told him his trouble came from failing to clear his fuel line, he was educated. When his benefactor refused any reward and said "I'm Ralph Evinrude", he was amazed. If he had known Ralph Evinrude he wouldn't have been surprised, for Ralph was born to outboard boating and is one of its greatest enthusiasts.

Ralph was born in Milwaukee on September 27, 1907. This was just after his father, Ole Evinrude, had built his first outboard of pieces of this and that in his machine shop. At that time Ole had no idea that this thing that he had built to save himself the chore of rowing would grow into the thing that would completely change his life, as well as the lives of millions of boatmen worldwide.

Ole and Bess Evinrude took their son on his first outboard ride before he could walk. The outboard has been his greatest interest ever since he was old enough to know what it was.

Ralph Evinrude's boyhood wasn't too different from that of most Americans. In prep school (Principia at St. Louis) he starred in football and tennis. As soon as school let out he raced back to Milwaukee to spend his summers testing outboards and helping with the advertising photography program as both model and photographer.

In 1925, Ralph entered the University of Wisconsin to study engineering. Every weekend he came home to work in the family business, the Elto Outboard Motor Company. Ole and Bess started this company in 1921 after Chris Meyer, Ole's original partner at Evinrude Detachable Rowboat Motor Company, said he was not interested in this new twin cylinder outboard which Ole had first offered to Chris. If he wasn't test-driving boats, he was photographing them, or fiddling around the shop in cold weather. Saturday work, either a half or full day, was the rule then, remember.....?

By the summer of 1927, Ole had developed the new Elto Speedster. Ralph spent a lot of the summer driving around the Midwest demonstrating it to boat builders. His enthusiasm was so strong that when school time came again in September, he talked his parents into letting him stay out for



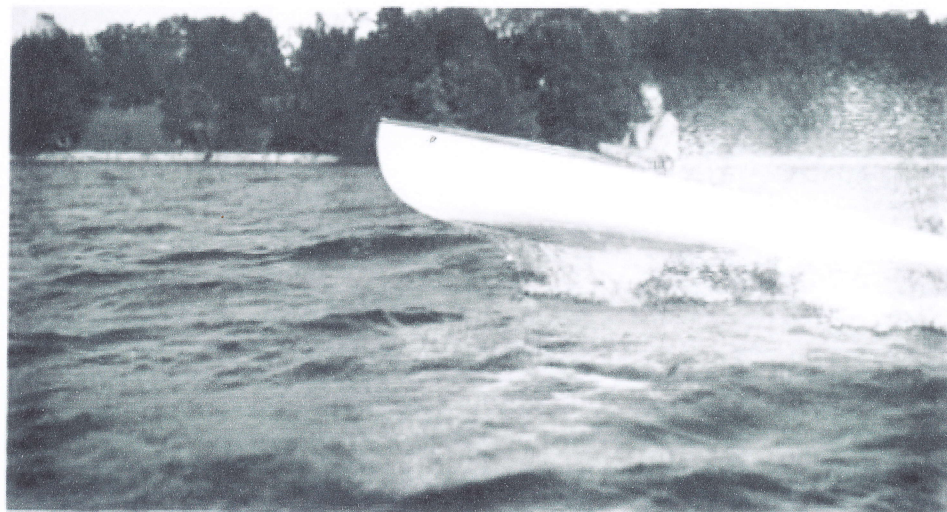
"just a semester" to help get this new engine off to a good start, as well as complete the testing on the new Quad, the world's first 4 cylinder outboard, then a-borning.

During September and October, Ralph and I personally boat tested every one of the first 1000 Speedsters to come off the line. Each Speedster had to make the then sensational speed of 22.5 miles per hour on either a Thompson or a Penn Yan step plane or it was not passed for shipment.

Right after the first 1000 Speedsters were boat tested and production was rolling well, the Quad, which had been kept very much under raps, was ready for extensive boat testing. During the latter part of October and all of November until the freeze, Ralph, his uncle, Rob Cary, and I drove out to Oconomowoc Lake, where the Evinrude's had their summer home, to give the new Quads the hardest going over possible. We used a larger Thompson step plane and a Hemming Larson Typhoon, a "huge" boat for those days - 48 inches wide at the transom as I remember.

Secrecy was the big idea as we at Elto wanted to "spring" the Quad as a big surprise at the New York Motor Boat Show in January. The New York show officially opened the next year's boating season back in those times. There were no year-round residents on the part of the lake we were using for tests, and to the uninitiated our boat tests meant nothing.

One day, late in November, Ralph got an idea for a picture that had to be one of the greatest advertising pictures taken up to that time. Ralph and Rob Cary drove the Thompson slowly, out of a plane to make the biggest possible wake and I, with another Quad on the Larson Typhoon, drove across the wake at full speed (about 35 MPH) jumping into the air while Ralph tried to "catch" the jump on film. We made several trys and Ralph got some good shots, the best of which was used for the center "spread" in the 1928 Elto catalog. This first picture of an outboard jumping caused a sensation that opened the new worlds of sporting thrills to outboarding. Also it sold out the season's production of Quads before the first motor was shipped.



Ralph Evinrude testing Elto Outboard Motors (Rhinelander Boat) on Oconomowoc Lake in Wisconsin in the mid-twenties.



Ralph did not return to school for the second semester; there was just too much development and production work to be done. Instead, in the fall of 1927 he went on the payroll for the very first time, although for years he had worked hard at all kinds of jobs around the factory, especially testing. Incidentally, his salary was miserably small, but that made no difference to Ralph.

Came the next fall and while his mother did her best to get Ralph to return to the University, he was just too busy testing and developing new outboard ideas. The same situation prevailed the next year and finally Mrs. Evinrude gave up and let Ralph do what he liked best - work with outboards.

Meanwhile, other big things had been happening. Stephen F. Briggs, President of Briggs and Stratton of Milwaukee, had acquired Ole Evinrude's original Evinrude Motor Company. So, in 1929 he presented Ole with a plan to combine Evinrude, Elto and Lockwood of Jackson, Michigan, all three of which had been most successful in 1928, to form the Outboard Motors Corporation. Briggs became Board Chairman, Ole was the President, and Ralph became the Export Sales Manager of the new firm.

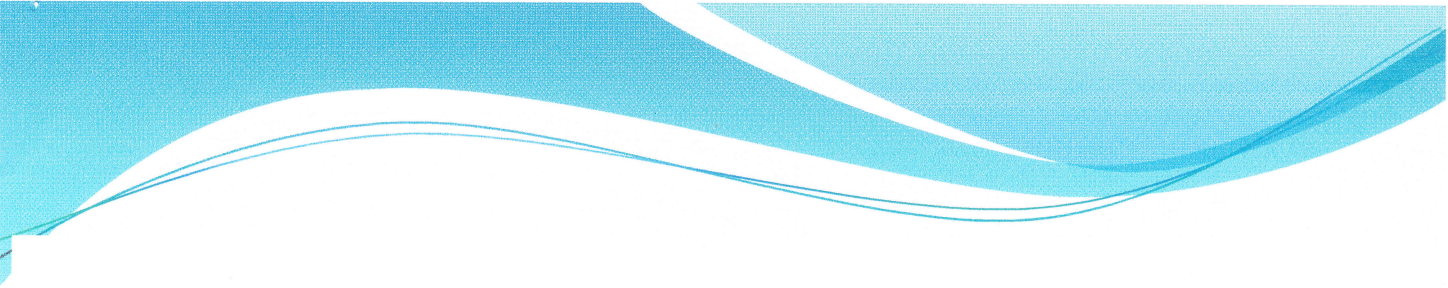
In 1932 Ralph Evinrude became OMC Production Manager. Friends who worked with him then recall that he was intensely interested in the work of every department. He was enthusiastic about every phase of the business. He never looked like the boss' son. Like his father he was a shirt sleeve worker who was eager to get the job done and happy to pitch in wherever he could help.

Bess Evinrude greatly reduced her activities in 1930. Her health was not good. I don't remember that she took an active part in the operation of the business after sometime in 1931. Finally, she passed on in the spring of 1933. Mrs. Evinrude was a very strong person, mentally. She was always even tempered. She jumped on Ralph and me for being out on the river or lake testing motors until after dark, but it was a kindly jumping.

I well remember one time when she had her fill of the way one of the big boating magazines was treating us. We at Elto were spending just as much money in advertising in their magazine as was our strongest competitor. Yet we were getting next to no publicity and our competitors were getting reams. The space peddler for the magazine said he could do nothing about it, so Mrs. Evinrude just cancelled all our space for the balance of the year. The first thing that happened was a long distance phone call from the publisher. He was put out. Mrs. Evinrude was very pleasant, but said, "we have no desire to reinstate, but that she would be glad to have them come out to see us though".

So in came three pieces of big brass from the magazine. Mrs. Evinrude told them that she felt Elto was being most unfairly treated publicity-wise, and that we would spend our money where it was appreciated. The publishers were in high dudgeon: Why, no one could tell them how to run their magazine. They would never let an advertiser tell them what they had to do, etc. To all of which Mrs. Evinrude stayed very calm and pleasant and reminded the boys that they should run their sheet as they saw fit, but that we were going to spend our advertising money as we saw fit. She hoped they wouldn't again try to tell her how she should spend our advertising dollars; she was glad they had this frank talk, she would be glad to see them any time, but now she was busy. The boys stalked out, went to their hotel, and called back in a few minutes asking for another meeting. Mrs. Evinrude said, "Fine! Come on back, if you have anything worthwhile to say." Or, words to that effect.





The final upshot was that Mrs. Evinrude told the boys she would reinstate the ad for one month and whether she would go for any more would depend each month on how fairly Elto was treated. She didn't want even one more line of "ink" than the competitor, but she would look for just as much, and properly placed too - not back in the classified section. The boys agreed and from that time on Elto got just as much "ink" as the competitors. The word got around and from that time on Elto was fairly treated everywhere.

When Ole Evinrude died in 1934, the OMC Directors elected Ralph to succeed him as President. There was one dissenting vote - that of Ralph Evinrude. He thought the job should have gone to Vice-President Jake Stern, who had most ably piloted OMC through the shoal waters of the great depression. Only Jake Stern's insistence persuaded Ralph to take the job.

In 1935 - 36, Steve Briggs and Ralph Evinrude purchased the controlling interest in the Johnson Motor Company of Waukegan and merged it with OMC to form the Outboard, Marine and Manufacturing Company. (The name was shortened to Outboard Marine Corporation in 1956). Mr. Evinrude was elected President and Steve Briggs became Chairman of the new company. Under the leadership of Briggs and Evinrude, the company pioneered many basic improvements in outboard motor design that greatly helped the growth of America's giant pleasure boating market and established OMC as the industry's leader.

During World War II, Mr. Evinrude put in twelve to fourteen hour days directing OMC's war material production and spent his evenings and weekends - as a chief boatswain's mate on patrol for the U.S. Coast Guard Temporary Reserve. He turned his own cruiser, then in Florida, over to the Coast Guard where a more fortunately located skipper patrolled its balmy coastal waters while Evinrude stood watches on icy Lake Michigan.

In 1953 Mr. Evinrude was elected Vice-Chairman of the Board and Chairman of OMC's Executive Committee, the offices which he held until his election as Board Chairman in December, 1963.

Mr. Evinrude maintains his principal home and office at Jensen Beach, Florida near one of OMC's salt water testing facilities, and another home in Milwaukee where the Evinrude division of OMC is situated. He also has a hay fever retreat on Georgian Bay in Canada.

Mr. Evinrude's wife is Frances Langford, well known as an actress and singer. They share strong interests in the company's business and their recreations - boating, fishing and traveling. They make a practice of traveling almost everywhere together, even on Ralph's frequent business trips. A good many thousand GIs remember the hours of fine entertainment afforded them by Frances Langford and Bob Hope during the WW II days in Europe and the Pacific, as well as in Korea and lastly in Vietnam.

Wherever they are, the Evinrudes are likely to be found aboard a boat. Whether it is on their 118 foot yacht, the Chanticleer, their outboard-powered houseboat, or an Evinrude or Johnson powered runabout, they take every opportunity to get out on the water. Even during cruises aboard the Chanticleer, Mr. Evinrude doesn't lose touch with outboarding. He carries two outboard boats aboard and sometimes a dozen motors of various sizes to test drive and demonstrate them.

He takes an active part in all phases of OMC's operations and presides at all OMC Board of Directors and Executive Committee meetings. Wherever he goes, Ralph makes informal calls on OMC dealers to get first-hand

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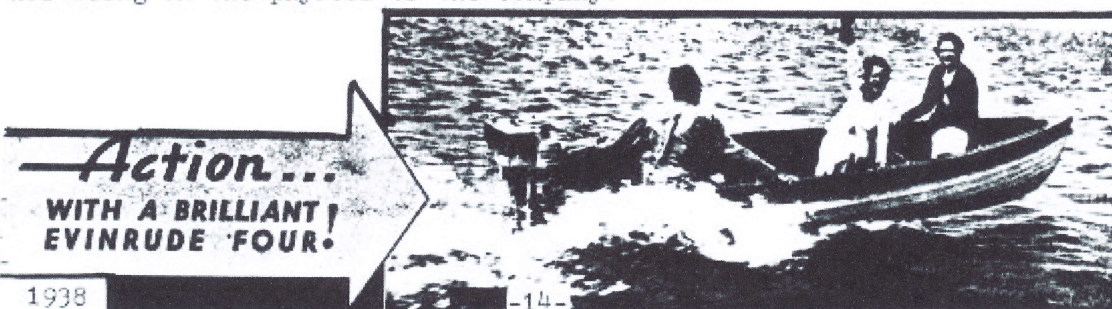
opinions on the performance of company products and discuss common problems. Ralph Evinrude has taken an active part in many marine organizations. However, the title of which he is most proud is Chairman of the Evinrude Boating Foundation. This organization perpetuates his father's memory by presenting one of Boating's most coveted annual honors, the Ole Evinrude Award, to an individual or group that has an outstanding lifetime record of contributions to recreational boating.

I must add a personal note or two about Ralph. When he was working on a project, time meant absolutely nothing. He would work on motor testing on a lake or a river until it was way too dark to see. He would run boats in weather so cold that boats would get covered with ice. He and I have been "bawled out" by his mother many a time for staying out too long. The job at hand was all important. As far as I can see, he still hasn't changed. The job comes first.

Another very strong memory concerns his courage. Way back in the fall of 1928, six of us went up above the dam on the Milwaukee River to try out a new boat just developed by Gordon Hooton of Grand Rapids, Michigan. He was the builder of the Hooton Model "R" and the Hooton Safety Plane. One of our engineers, Charley Koller, took Hooton's new boat with a fast Quad and proceeded to wind it up. After a few wild short turns, Charley became convinced that the boat could not be capsized, an almost fatal error. Suddenly, after a few real corkscrews, the boat jumped in the air and fell back on its top. That would have been all right, but here was Charley in bitterly cold water, with a leather jacket and NO LIFE PRESERVER. Charley was a poor swimmer; he panicked and yelled for help. Ralph Evinrude ran up the shore, shedding his clothes as he ran, plunged into the bitterly cold water, reached Charley as he was going under, and held him up. Gordon Hooton jumped in when he could see that Ralph was having a hard time with Charley and helped hold both of them up until I got there by frantically paddling a small Hooton. I am a poor swimmer, so the best I could do was get there with a boat. When I reached them, Charley was unconscious, Ralph was exhausted in the cold water and Hooton nearly so. Yet Ralph was still struggling to keep Charley above water. Because I was in a boat, I was able to get all three safely ashore. All three pulled through although we were not sure whether or not Charley would make it for a while. But he finally started to breathe and the day was saved. Ralph Evinrude had saved a life and the day.

Some good things came out of that experience. First, from that time on, no Evinrude employee ever went out in a boat without a life preserver. Next, a rescue boat with motor was always present, with a driver. Finally, precautions were doubled in cold or bad weather. Also, no driver was ever permitted to do foolish things like cutting "didos" while on Evinrude time.

Finally, although Ralph has been working with outboards for several years, more than fifty - the year 1977 marks the 50th or Golden Anniversary of his being on the payroll of the company.



**Action...**  
**WITH A BRILLIANT!**  
**EVINRUDE FOUR.**

1938

-14-





Ralph Evinrude

Chairman of the Board, Outboard Marine Corporation

Note: Ralph Evinrude passed away in Jensen Beach Fl. May 21, 1986 at the age of 78.