

# Rideau Ferry Race Boat Regatta, Aug. 19, 2017

Report: Ken Kirk

Photos: Laura Gaggi & Terressa Peill



**Adam Gibb & Mike Krzyzanowski with an awesome display of vintage Mercury racing power.**



**Peter Krzyzanoski explaining that his switch from Outboard to Inboard racing was all about his knees.**

The Rideau River Yacht Club is an historic boat racing venue with a legacy that goes back more than 100 years. They used to race steam boats here. From the 1920's through to the 1960's this was the site of major outboard and inboard racing events on an annual basis.

In recent years the spirit of boat racing has returned to Rideau Ferry with the organization of a Vintage Race Boat Regatta scheduled to be held every second year....alternating with the semi-annual Clayton Antique Race Boat Regatta.

This year's event was sanctioned by the newly formed Ontario Power Boat Racing Association. Planned events included both exhibition runs by vintage outboard and inboard race boats as well as OPBRA competitive drag boat races for various contemporary outboard classes.

Saturday morning was dedicated to the running of vintage race boats. MLAOC member Adam Gibb ran his Hal Kelly "Madcap" powered by a 1956 Johnson 30 along with a pair of Mercury powered Gesscraft Boats built in Fitch Bay, Quebec and driven at Rideau Ferry by builder Ghislain Freniere & his son and daughter.

A highlight of the vintage outboard line up were three Switzer Wings. Kevin Boyd was there with "Miss Diablo 3". This boat, driven by Kenny Kitson, had been a World Champion...the first to set an APBA/OPC record exceeding 100 mph. It's final competition record was 113.20 mph.



**World Champion, vintage Switzer Wing, with Kevin Boyd at the controls, ready to launch at Rideau Ferry.**



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Kevin's son, Chris, drove another Switzer Wing, "Thunderball" and the third and fastest Wing on the day was "Dust In the Wind" driven by Rich Luhrs.

The Switzer Wings were first built in 1961. They were ideally suited to the 6 cyl. 100 hp Mercury. With twin 100's they could easily exceed 100 mph, more than 25% faster than any other boat in their class. In 1965 Switzer converted production from wood to fiberglass. Carl Kiekhaefer, knowing the potential of the design, bought the exclusive rights to the 18' fiberglass "Wing" and ordered 34 of these boats for Mercury Factory supported racers. It was exciting to see three of these incredible vintage race boats at Rideau Ferry.

The afternoon however brought a tragic end to the racing weekend. Long time boat racer Bill Pearson lost his life when his Grand Prix class Lauderbach hydroplane got airborne and blew over. It was estimated GP-444 was travelling in excess of 110 mph when she left the water. All further exhibition running and racing was suspended and the Sunday schedule was also cancelled.

Bill Pearson had been a long time participant in vintage race boat events throughout North America. The race boat community was deeply affected and all in attendance were stunned and saddened by his accident.

MLAOC Members in attendance included Brian Hendrick, Ken Kirk, Adam Gibb, Jeff Stevenson, John Gullick & Mike Krzyzanowski. Long time Outboard Collectors Dave Linkletter, Steven Fox & Peter Krzyzanowski were also on site.



Ken Kirk, centre, with Kevin & Chris Boyd , owner/drivers of MERC powered Switzer Wings.



Ken Kirk & Steven Fox with Adam Gibb's Johnson powered Hal Kelly "Madcap".



L-R: Tina & Ghislain Freniere with Adam Gibb. In the foreground are Ghislain's two Hal Kelly "Airborne" runabouts with Mercury Mk 20 motors.