

# forward

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## CHARGER REDUX

Dodge Legend  
Howls Again

## BOATLOAD

The Legacy of  
Chrysler Marine



FAST JOHN FITCH AND HIS  
CHRYSLER-POWERED C-2

# RACER

# WALKING

BY MIKE SALISBURY

Chrysler Marine hit the water hard with its 16-foot Fury Runabouts and 23-foot Commodore Cabin Cruisers, leaving only power and prestige in its wake.

# WAVES

WHEN HE SAW THE BOAT, DAVE Kain knew it was something special. "It had decals on the valve covers of the engine—Super Bee III," Kain says.

A Chrysler guy since his first car (a '64 Barracuda), Kain knew the motor in the boat was a big, bad Mopar machine. What he didn't know was that the boat he'd found in the local classified ads also was a legendary Chrysler product.

Nor could he have guessed that he would soon discover the hugely successful world of Chrysler Marine—and forever become a part of it.

The bumblebee signature on the V-8 in this boat he'd come across was the first clue. It meant this boat was from the top

of Chrysler's performance line, and it ran like smoke on the water.

It also looked like no other boat Kain had ever seen. It had a futuristic design from a time in America when the future was a destination you dreamed of, and Scotty and Captain Kirk beamed you to it. But where did this visionary look of tomorrow come from—who created it?

After two months of persuasion, his wife gave in and Dave bought it. And in his quest for the truth of its origins, Kain started a Website that has grown into a devoted group named after the original line of boats, the Chrysler Crew. Since the day when he found that Conqueror S-III, his first love boat, Kain has owned





six more Conqueror S-IIIs and two Conqueror 105 outboards.

"I do have a special place in my heart for the S-III ... but," he confesses, "the hottest-looking Chrysler boat is the '71-'73 Conqueror Shallow Vee in metalflake blue gel coat wearing the white racing stripes on the transom. That boat has the sexy, pop-up gas cap just like the '68-'70 Dodge Charger muscle cars."

The boats of Chrysler did have some Mopar genes, but the take-no-prisoners Chrysler muscle cars have a whole lot of Marine DNA in them as well. The infamous motors in those '60s and '70s Chrysler muscle cars—like the 340

six-pack, the 440 six-pack and all the 426 Hemis from 1964–1971—were Chrysler Marine and Industrial assemblies.

"And following the footsteps of those collectible Chrysler muscle cars, a high-performance Chrysler boat is becoming a valuable collectible," Kain says.

Chrysler Marine had muscle in numbers, too. To all that V-8 engine firepower being built in the Chrysler Marine house, add their outboard production, and you got a total of 45.5 percent of the domestic marine engine market: That is what Chrysler dominated just before 1970. Now mix in 46 different beautifully designed boats, including rowboats and sailboats. Then ask

The 1968 Chrysler Commodore was part of the Hydro Vee fleet, created by industrial designer Don Mortrude. Out of Mortrude's designs grew the line that included the 15- and 16-foot Charger Runabouts, the 20-foot Carvel Cuddy Cabin and the Clipper 486 Day Cruiser. All were branded as Chrysler Boats.

yourself if it is any surprise that Chrysler Marine became the first to offer complete boat-and-motor packages in the widest range of styling and motors.

Chrysler developed its first marine engine in 1927. The Imperial produced 100 hp from 835 pounds of six cylinders. In 1928, that motor was chosen to power the Chris-Craft Cadet runabout. An eight-cylinder was created and, by 1931, Chrysler's newly named Marine and Industrial Activities division produced six- and eight-cylinder industrial engines and marine engines.

West Bend Outboard joined the Chrysler product line in 1965, and with it, Marine grabbed a 29 percent share of the domestic marine engine market. Chrysler then commissioned the creation of its first original line of powerboats from industrial designer Don Mortrude of Pompano Beach, Florida.

In 1967, marine architect Dick Anderson of Chrysler Boat created the company's mainstay powerboat hull design. His Cathedral Hull concept was developed into a full line of runabouts,

bowriders and bass boats in a model range named after milestone Chrysler car designs. These boats, upholstered in metallic vinyl, were the 16-foot Fury Runabout and Sport Fury Bowrider. The Chrysler design team's 15-foot Sport Satellite Bowrider design became the best-selling Chrysler boat in the company's history.

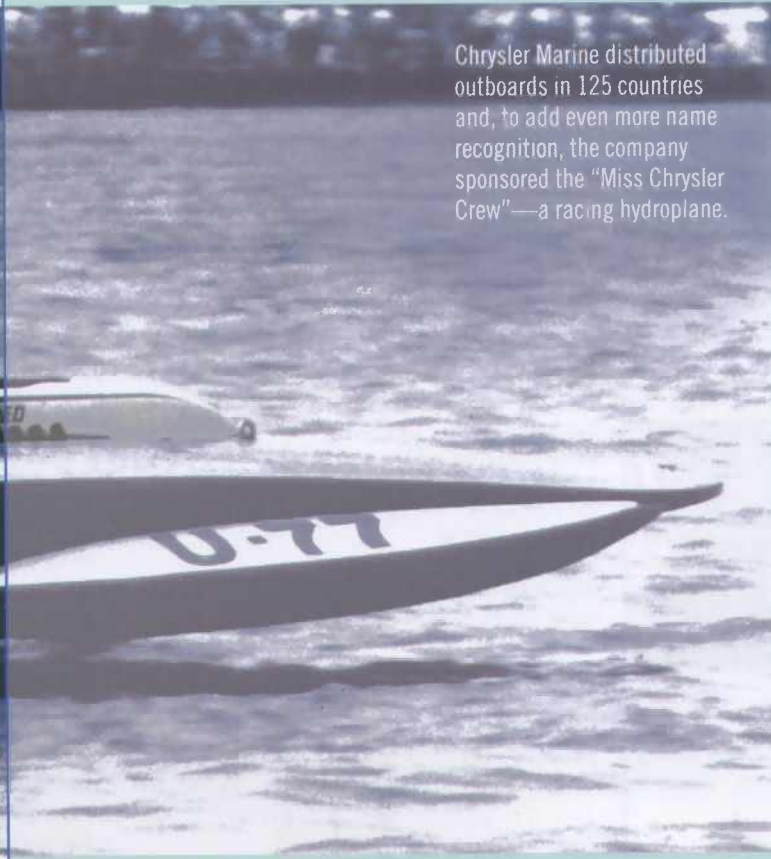
Sailing was yet another water world into which Chrysler would plunge. In 1965, Lone Star, a boat builder, became Chrysler Lone Star. The LS-13 and LS-16 designs were carried on until Rod Macalpine-Downie of Great Britain supplemented them with his designs—the Pirateer, Mutineer and Buccaneer sailers, and the high-performance 16½-foot Musketeer catamaran. The Crossbow, an earlier Macalpine-Downie design, had set a world speed record for sailboats.

Halsey Herreshoff is widely regarded as the world's best sailboat designer of the 1970s. So Chrysler Boats—an offspring of the company that created some of the best-designed cars of that era—obeyed its genetic codes and



“This boat was from the top of Chrysler's performance line and it ran like smoke on the water.”





Chrysler Marine distributed outboards in 125 countries and, to add even more name recognition, the company sponsored the "Miss Chrysler Crew"—a racing hydroplane.



## POWDER PUFFS

One of the more intriguing products to emerge from the Chrysler Outboard Marine Division in Hartford, Wisconsin, wasn't even a watercraft—it was built for snow.

It was the Sno Runner, a pint-size relative of today's snowmobiles.

Produced by Chrysler Marine from 1979 to 1982, the Sno Runner was powered by a 134-cc, two-cycle, 7-hp engine. The engine transferred the power to a chain track of 21 plastic paddles.

To ride the Sno Runner, both feet were placed on a footrest attached to the front ski, riders grabbed the handlebars and held on. The Sno Runner weighed only 85 pounds and was said to reach a top speed of 20–29 mph. With a headlight and brake light, it could be operated at night.

The Sno Runner could be quickly disassembled into three pieces and stored easily in the trunk of a car or at home.

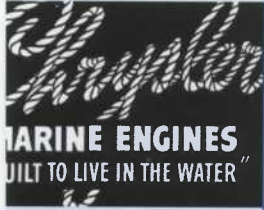
Twenty-three years after Chrysler ended production, the Sno Runner is popular among collectors.



# footprints

CHRYSLER MARINE TIME LINE

1931



The division that has made marine engines since 1927 is renamed Marine and Industrial Activities, Amplex Division.

1965



Chrysler acquires Lone Star Boats and West Bend outboards. Chrysler becomes a large-scale boat manufacturer.

1970



The sailboat division, aided by the work of renowned designer Halsey Herreshoff, enjoys success in the '70s.

1980



Chrysler exits the boat building business. The company sells its outboard business in 1984.

commissioned H.H. to design its larger cruising line of sailboats: the C-20, C-22, C-26 and C-30. These classic designs were built by Chrysler through the '70s.

But where did Kain's Conqueror design come from? Even after all its success, Chrysler couldn't rest. Bob Adair was a designer at Chrysler when he was assigned the task of creating an icon that would project a core identity of the Chrysler brand: performance. Thus the most recognizable floating symbol of Chrysler Marine power and styling was born—the Conqueror.

“Chrysler at that time had a major part in the Apollo moon mission,” Adair wrote to Kain. “If you stand your Conqueror boat on its transom, you will see the profile of the Apollo space craft.”

In the restructuring of Chrysler in the late '70s, the company divested itself of this profitable division. Chrysler Marine has gone into history but remains an essential part of the present and future for enthusiasts like Dave Kain. ■

*Mike Salisbury is a writer, marketing designer, photographer and automotive enthusiast.*

