



Three eras of "Louise J"

NORM GRIFFIN (LOUISE J)

Norm Griffin and the boat "Louise J", two names that go hand in hand in the sport of water ski racing. Starting ski racing as a family sport with a 15'6" Fleetfin, Norm put in a massive 427 Chev. and started to pull Chica and Charles Courtney and began to have great success in the Zone 1 Ski Events. He then went into a bigger Lewis boat, with the same 427 Chev. type motor, these being centremount motors, still with the exhaust pipes coming out the bottom of the boat, and it was with this Lewis Hull that he won his first Bridge to Bridge, when he lost his regular team of the Courtneys and pulled a make shift team consisting of Col Nurthan and Ron Stevens. (Ron Stevens still skied with a bar out in front in those days, and their time was 1 hour 5 minutes.) At that time Norm was very wrapped up in the point score event for the season and used to pull skiers from sub juniors right through to the novelty events on every race day, and was successful in winning this point score for quite a number of years.

To tell a short story about this competition, in the point score one year there was a tube race, and Norm saw his biggest rival pull his boat out with a broken Drive Shaft. Norm's boat, a clinker built wooden Lewis hull, which was leaking very badly, was then pulled out, as Norm decided not to compete in the Tube Race. On sight of the main competitions boat being put back into the water, he hammered some nails into the Hull and when he was half a minute from the take off time, had his boat pushed off the trailer, started up and completed the Tube Race (which he was not successful in winning), and then pulled the boat out immediately. This shows how intense the competition was and how keen a competitor Norm Griffin was, and that goes back to the late sixties, early seventies era.

Norm has won the Bridge to Bridge 3 times, 1969 when he towed Ron Stevens and Col Nurthan, then in 1971 he pulled two sixteen year old skiers, Wayne Jones and Glen Faust to victory, and again in 1973 with Wayne Jones and Steven Clifton skiing. Norm has been successful in pulling countless numbers of skiers to victory in Australian Championships. He has won all the classical events that there are in Australia, and in 1981 he even had his boat sent to Italy to compete in the World Championships.

His Company have also been great sponsors to water skiing over the years, particularly the Bridge to Bridge, where they have sponsored that event on at least two occasions, and the prize money for the outright winner on numerous other occasions. Without doubt, Norm would be the best known ski racing driver in Australia, and is known throughout the world. One year he was handed a birthday present in an envelope and it consisted of a ticket to go to America to see the American Ski Racing Championships. What makes Norm Griffin so competitive? It is his great will to win and his eye to detail. His current Hull is a basic copy of the American Spectre Hull. It is 19' long, 6'6" wide with a 16 degrees V bottom. This boat was timed in Queensland several years ago, four runs at an average of 105 miles per hour. It is powered by a Tall Truck Block with a 454 Crank Shaft, with 400 thou longer carello rods on A rails 8 to 1 pistons. The Tall Block gives the same rod angle as a 427, but it gives the extra cubic inches needed for ski racing. He also uses Eski rollers and followers, Bert Jones Cam, its fuel and air is supplied through a Hillborn Injection and a 671 blower. It is propelled by a 11 x 15 1/2 Menkins Prop through a Wasson Gear Box with a 54% Overdrive, giving out a genuine 800 Horsepower plus.

As well as towing the great champions, Norm has always pulled his family from his son Ronald when he was a sub junior, through to his daughters Fay and Lynette, who was a great woman skier and he towed her to several Australian Marathon Womens Championships. Currently, he is towing his youngest daughter Louise, who was only just born when "Louise J" received its name. Norm's wife, June, is a dedicated ski racing judge, which gives the family a total involvement in the sport.