

# DON ESTRIDGE

## Pioneer - Power Boat Racing - Inducted 2009



By Brian Pratt



**Don Estridge** (*Don Estridge collection*)

Don Estridge is one of those names in motor sport that sometimes aren't noticed because they don't make the big headlines. But he did win races and he did win a championship and he did put in over twenty years in the sport of power boat racing.

Don Estridge started racing boats in 1957 when he and Don Matheson purchased a used 14' hydroplane hull, and installed a Ford V-8 60. They raced "Skeeter" around BC and Washington State for a few years with fair success.

In 1959 at Harrison Lake, at full speed for the start of a race, "Skeeter" jumped sideways about 10 feet when another hydroplane hit her on the side. Don was able to continue racing and finished third. When slowing down entering the pits, the boat promptly sank. After recovery and upon inspection, 6 feet of the side and frames were broken, the other boat had even hit the seat Don was sitting in. Burning the "midnight oil" the crew repaired the hull and engine and made it to the next race at Green Lake, Wash., 7 days later.

In 1962 Jim Pavey and Don built a 19' SK class flat bottom hull of Sitka

Spruce frames and 20' lengths of plywood. Don built up and installed a full race 392 cu. in. Chrysler Hemi in "Skeeter 2" and raced the boat around the Pacific Northwest for several years with many trophies being won, including high point champion, SK class, for BC in 1970.

One time at the Kelowna Regatta Don was trading first and second place in rough water when on the exit of the

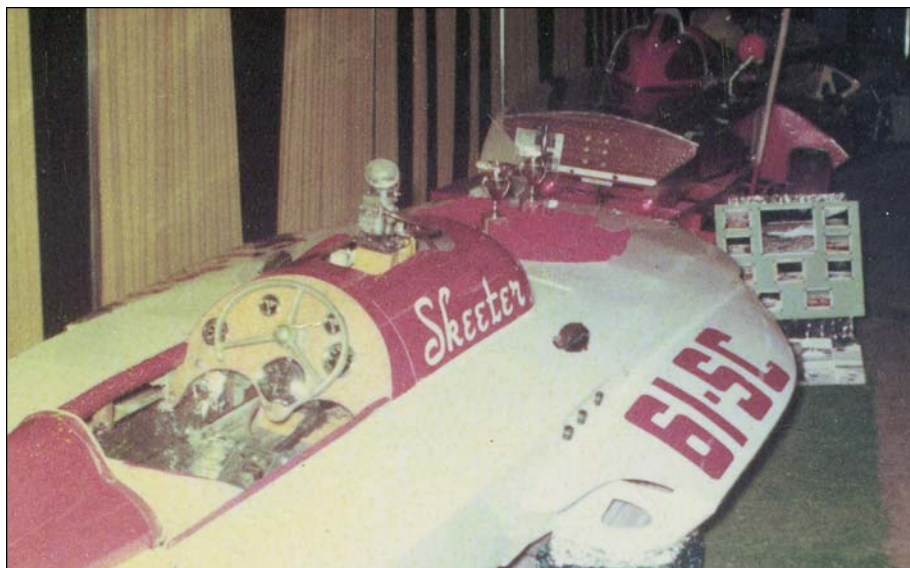
corner in front of the grandstand "Skeeter 2" spun 180 degrees. The water built up against the transom and inertia caused the boat to flip end over end, while Don stayed in the seat. The 2000 lb. boat going end over end at high speed sure put a lot of water in the air.

In 1975 Don purchased a Sanger racing hull from Fresno Calif. A 326 cu. in. Jaguar V-12 full race engine that he had built up was made to fit "Mystery". That boat was raced until 1980.

Don Estridge also won first place trophies as a relief driver, driving Bob Henry Sr.'s 266 cu. in. hydroplane "Mercury 7", Ron Bestward's crackerbox "Besty's Baby", and Lock Madill's 150 cu. in. hydroplane "Spitfire 2".

A championship and many race wins in over 20 years dedicated to power boat racing makes Don Estridge a Greater Vancouver Motorsport Pioneer.

As Don says, "boat racing was a blast!"



**Skeeter** (*Don Estridge collection*)