

NOTE: The following was provided by Art Smrekar and is presented exactly as he drafted it.

Hi,

Good old Keaton Boats. When I first saw the boat it was at Lodi Lake in California. My first ski tournament I spotted this great boat pulling skiers. The boat was owned by Sam Paragary and his kids were great skiers from Stockton Ski Club. The next week I called Jack Keaton about the boat. I sold my boat and a few months later called Jack and made a date middle of winter. My friend Al and I went for a ride and then a ski ride. We bought 2 boats. Al's was for salt water no rug no floor boards. Nothing fancy. I fixed mine fancy 210 hp 289 cu in Ford engines from Dearborn Michigan. Russ's dad Sonny<sup>1</sup> same boat same engine. Myself and Lloyd Beam had a shop at Channel Lumber on Cutting Blvd in Richmond. John and Sandy Jolley bought a boat. We were all Richmond Water Ski Club (members). My friend Paul Wells bought the first boat Jack built. It had a glass hull wood deck glassed over. Paul redid it.

You were asking about engines. We did Pontiac engines 210-280-427 Ford factory engines. We had 6 (boats) in the Golden Gate Ski Club, maybe 5 in the Sacramento Club. John Matranga had a big Lincoln Marada engine in his. It would scare you when he started it up. 4 or 5 in Diablo Ski club. Lloyd Fox had 2-3 boats.

Richmond changed our name to the Berkeley Water Ski Club because it took over the lake in Berkeley.

I think there were 3 at Donner Lake. We had a few tournaments there every year. It was kind of weird. You go around the bouys you can see the cord so clear and the anchor is in the water.

Jack packed up 2 boats and shipped them to Paul Boel's Tivoli Garden Ski Club in Michigan. Paul owned cheese factories.

We did about 12 for Berkeley Club. We did 2 Keaton V-drives, 2-3 boats went to San Jose.

Jack called the boat 17' Bonanza.<sup>2</sup>

A.W.S.A was using double outboards on Crosby hulls in those days. Few of our tourny -Cal State Regionals I had to put my boat in the water because outboards would not go 36mph for men's jump and men slalom. Back then we had foot throttles on our boats. After the drivers drove the boat a couple of times they said, "sure liked the boat." Drivers were Chuck Stearns' dad Bill and Larry Panacho dad Joe. Chuck and Larry like the boat also (World Champions).

I think one of Jack's ski boats had a v-drive engine. Jack and I won a ski race on Sacramento River. Jack also was winning a boat race and he flipped over that day. I don't know how I did it but I picked him up out of the safety boat and carried him up the levee bank to the ambulance.<sup>3</sup>

We were also in the S.F. Boat Show and we had a movie going all the time that we did at a ski shows. I made a center ski pylon to fit over my center ski tow to be high above the windshield. At 32-34 mph we had a Batman and Robin. Batman would go to the left – Robin to the right one rope 75' long the other 60' long. We swap ends in the turn, skiers would criss cross over and under and keep skiing. I would bet we invented that trick in the early 60's.

Jack had the best boat and best glass work on the market.

Al and I skied and experimented with Berkeley and Jacuzzi jet boats. There was nothing better or good looking on the market than Jack's Berkeley jet ski boat.

The only 2 things I did with Jack's boat is design a rudder and have a mold made in L.A. Lloyd, Jack and I had to make a better new motor cover for the bigger engines and Jack made a new mold.

I gave the boat business to Lloyd and I went into the concrete pumping business. Lloyd passed away in a couple of years.

When I won the U.S. 1968 Nationals Correct Craft offered me a promo boat. No charge then.

That's pretty much our little story.

Correct Craft came to California and then Mastercraft.

Jack and I are great friends. He never wanted to make too many changes. If he did he would have been in the top 3 mfgs.

---

1 Referring to Russell Hollet's dad.

2 Art is referring to the 17' utility

3 Jack spent 10 days in the hospital recovering from this accident