

HAPPIEST DAY

STORY & PHOTOS - by
BOB SPELTZ



*TODD WARNER—The Burt Reynolds
of the Antique Boating World*

Editor's Note:

The era of restoring antique boats is just coming alive after a slow dawning. Within this relatively short span of time the love for old boats is becoming a father and son hobby, and in some instances, a business.

In ANTIQUE BOATING, Vol. I No. 3, July 1974, page 18, the title read, "FRANK WARNER, King of Antique Boat Collectors." Less than two years later, in January 1976, the 'King' welcomed a loyal subject, his son, Todd, to the Warner's kingdom of boats. The antique boating movement will certainly benefit from this injection of youthful energy.

Equally as illustrious, is the youthful writer of this story. Bob Speltz overcomes the confining need of a dialysis machine at least three times a week to pursue his vigorous interest in antique boats. Both Bob and Todd have spearheaded the First Annual Lake Minnetonka Antique and Classic Boat Rendezvous and the recent formation of the Land O Lakes Chapter of The Antique and Classic Boat Society, Inc. Congratulations to both and continued success in all future endeavors.

Back in January 1976 preliminary plans were laid to make a visit up to Lake Minnetonka and see first hand the collection of fine old classic and antique speedboats owned by Frank Warner and his son, Todd.

A number of phone calls later, it was decided that Tuesday, July 21st, would be "D" day. A good friend, Paul Vandersyde, of Albert Lea, Minnesota drove up with me and we were in for a real treat in the hours to come!

Upon arrival we met Todd a genial, outgoing, young man of 22, who led us down to his dock where we loaded cameras, briefcases, etc., aboard and headed out on the lake. The boat we rode in was a mint 1965 18' Century Sabre with Gull Wing top. The boat has less than 50 actual hours and is in splendid shape.

Lake Minnetonka has numerous arms, bays, and some 500 miles of shoreline. For the first hour and half we slowly cruised about the lake, dock hopping from place to place admiring other restored speedboats that Todd thought we should see. I was busy snapping photos and slides of as many of the boats as possible. Prior to eating lunch, we stopped at Frank Warner's home where we had a short visit. Frank's docks consist of seven covered slips with hoists, and containing, among others, a rare 19', three cockpit Hackercraft and an 18' Chris Craft twin cockpit runabout with barrel bow and stern which has

yet to be restored. At 1 p.m. we idled into the posh harbor at "Fletcher's on the Lake", a swank watering hole, and favorite stop for Minnetonka boaters. After tying up at the docks, we went in, and there met Mr. Jim Hauptman, Editor and Publisher of the new boating magazine, INLAND SKIPPER. Discussion quickly centered on the merits of various types of antique boats, and plans for our upcoming antique and classic boat get together scheduled for August. More about the show later on!

After lunch, Jim, Paul, Todd and I boarded the Century and headed over to the 'boat barn' - the real reason for our trip. Upon entering a small bay, we tied up in a municipal dock area and strolled across the street to see the "fleet"! Out in front of the building we saw an early 1950s Correct Craft and a 1956, 26' Chris Craft day cruiser parked on trailers. Todd opened the large swinging doors and here is the array of boats that lay before our eyes:

- 1953, 26' Riva speedboat with twin engines
- 1937, 27' Chris Craft, 3 cockpit, 2 windshield runabout with 285 hp, V-8 engine
- 1932, 16' Chris Craft split cockpit runabout
- 1915 Dowsett Canadian runabout - former rumrunner near Detroit
- 1947, Chris Craft 16' Utility
- 1947, 20' custom twin cockpit runabout with folding top (original)
- 1947, 17' Higgins utility
- 1949 racing runabout with 159 hp
- 1950 racing runabout with 159 hp
- 1929, 26' 3 cockpit Hackercraft runabout
- 1937, 19' Chris Craft sports runabout (only other one known to exist is owned by the Chris Craft family)
- 1935, 22' Chris Craft 3 cockpit runabout
- 1928, 24' Chris Craft runabout with original convertible top
- 1930, 30' Hackercraft 3 cockpit runabout with Landau top

After crawling over, under and through these fine boats, we were destined to see even more.

Up in a small grove behind the 'barn' were a number of other speedboats wrapped in tarps and resembling huge cocoons. I tried shooting photos in the building and in the woods, but I am afraid it was too dark. Here are the boats we saw in the woods:

- 1926, 29' Hackercraft runabout
- 1958 Century Coronado
- 1948, 20' Ventnor runabout with a rear fin
- 1936, 16' yellow Mullins steel Sea Eagle runabout

Behind the boat barn on the lower level we finally saw Todd's prize possessions; a 1955, 20' Chris Cobra; a 1955, 24' Shepherd hardtop; and a 1958, 23' Chris Craft Continental with hard top. After seeing all these fine boats, I really look forward to seeing many of them in our boat show later this summer.

On returning to Todd's home, we sat down to get a little background information for this story. In reminiscing Todd said he had always been interested in wooden boats and had spent his high school summers working for the local Century dealer pumping gas.

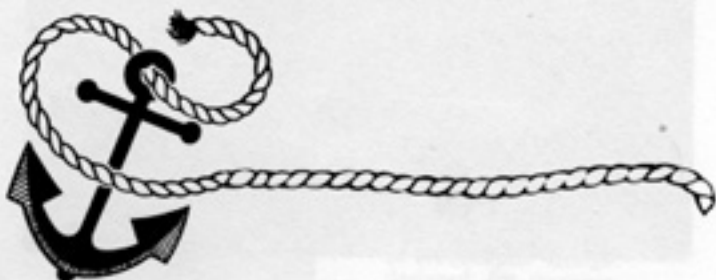
Frank's dad had always had boats on the lake, too, and it appears that Todd gets his interest from both his dad and his grandfather.

Todd is now very much in the boat business himself. Starting last January he has been actively selling, buying and restoring boats for his many customers. He said that he has received many fine leads and the day we were there he had some 12 boats for sale from the 1930s through the 1960s.

Recently Todd has become a dealer distributor for both Federal and Michigan props and he can custom build any shaft size to order. Even more astounding is that he has access to all the pre-1965 Century hardware molds, so he can make any parts that collectors may need. Electroplating services are also available.

It was soon 6 p.m. and time to head home. A day had just passed that neither of us will forget.

Again, Frank and Todd, "thanks" for all the kindnesses shown to us and all I can say is . . . that people like you can do nothing but help the antique and classic boat interest in the United States.



MATERIAL AND PHOTOS NEEDED

"I am writing this letter seeking help from readers of ANTIQUE BOATING concerning an upcoming book I am writing on the history of inboard speedboats.

I am very much in need of photos of custom speedboats such as DeWitte Lodge Torpedos, Hackercrafts, Gar Woods - anything large or small that is unusual.

Also, I need background information on Fitzgerald & Lee, Hutchinson, Minnett-Shields, Greavette, Ditchburn, etc. I want good photos of speedboats built by those firms.

I will appreciate all the help readers can give. I will be glad to copy any photos and return them to the owner, unharmed. Also, I will list your name in the 'credit' section for material provided.

Thanks to all readers in advance for your help".

Bob Speltz
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HAPPIEST DAY



1947 VENTNOR



BOAT STORAGE ON UPPER LOT



1958 23' C. C. CONTINENTAL



1930s CORRECT CRAFT - RIVA IN BARN



1932 26' CHRIS CRAFT



1953 20' RIVA