

PREFACE . . .

My name is Todd Warner and I would like to share with you some of my feelings and excitements about this book and its author, Bob Speltz.

I met Bob at the Minneapolis Boat Show in January 1976. He had driven from Albert Lea, about three hours away, just to view an exhibit of antique and classic motorboats, a small distance to travel for a man with Bob's passion and love for the real runabouts. In the time that has passed since then I have found Bob to be a walking encyclopedia on rare, unusual runabouts and boat builders. He deserves the title "Mr. Boat."

A decade has passed since the economics of fiberglass eliminated the art and craftsmanship of wooden runabouts. But with this volume a door is opened to the past, a time when a motorboat was a union of one man's idea with fine wood.

This is the only book on antique and classic motorboats. Bob Speltz has searched, on his own, for twenty years trying to uncover the history of wooden boats and boat builders. There is no doubt that he has accumulated a tremendous amount of knowledge on this topic.

The author has fully developed research topics on such greats in the motorboating world as Chris Smith of Chris-Craft (the Henry Ford of the boat business), John Hacker of Hacker Craft and Gar Wood. These individuals are described as using revolutionary ideas in making boats affordable—not only for those with great wealth but to a wider expanse of the public. For instance, in the surplus era following World War I it was possible to buy a Hispano-Suiza 12 cylinder airplane engine (from 180 horsepower to 200 horsepower) that originally cost \$5,000.00 for \$200.00. Also available were 12 cylinder Curtis OX5 airplane engines for \$50.00 (in the original crate). Men of average incomes could purchase engines,

design their own boats and have them built by custom boat builders in the range from \$1,500.00 to \$2,000.00.

It is indeed a pleasure to see the public reawaken and demand quality in their goods and to slow down to the pace where craftsmanship does make a difference. People are again starting to build new wooden runabouts and to care enough to restore and maintain the classics. With this new interest in mind the author has included information in this volume on regional, custom, Canadian and European builders of fine wooden boats. There is also evidence of this reawakening in the growth from east to west of interest clubs such as the chapters of Antique and Classic Boat Society, Inc. which are described also.

Within one chapter the reader is taken on an adventure to a water boat show, given suggestions on what to look for, told how to prepare an antique or classic boat for judging and exactly what the judges look for. For those readers really enthusiastic about the boat hobby there are also listings of places where restorable boats and old engine and boat parts may be found.

Beyond the knowledge and information shared with the reader, the author has conveyed a passion, a love for "The Real Runabouts." This element has propelled the creating and writing of the work over many sandbars. The author has a kidney disease and consequently spends three days a week on a dialysis machine. His strength to overcome these obstacles is truly admirable.

The author has dealt with the subject of wooden runabouts in a complete and total way stressing the individual attention each boat received which resulted in perfect beauty. At the present time he rejoices that the times show a tendency back to this style of building and caring for "The Real Runabouts."