

GUNTERSVILLE

STORY and PHOTOS by **HAROLD ROSE**

Rain, rain, and more rain. But when the Guntersville Junior Chamber of Commerce plan their annual boat race festival they let nothing stand in their way. The boats and their crews came here to race and race they did. At 10:00 am the JC's called a hasty meeting to determine whether to cancel the race or not. It was decided that another two hours would be given before a final decision would be made. By eleven o'clock the bank along the lake was lined with spectators braving the rain in hopes of seeing the giants warming up. Due to the number of spectators that were present and the willingness of the drivers, the race went on despite the rain.

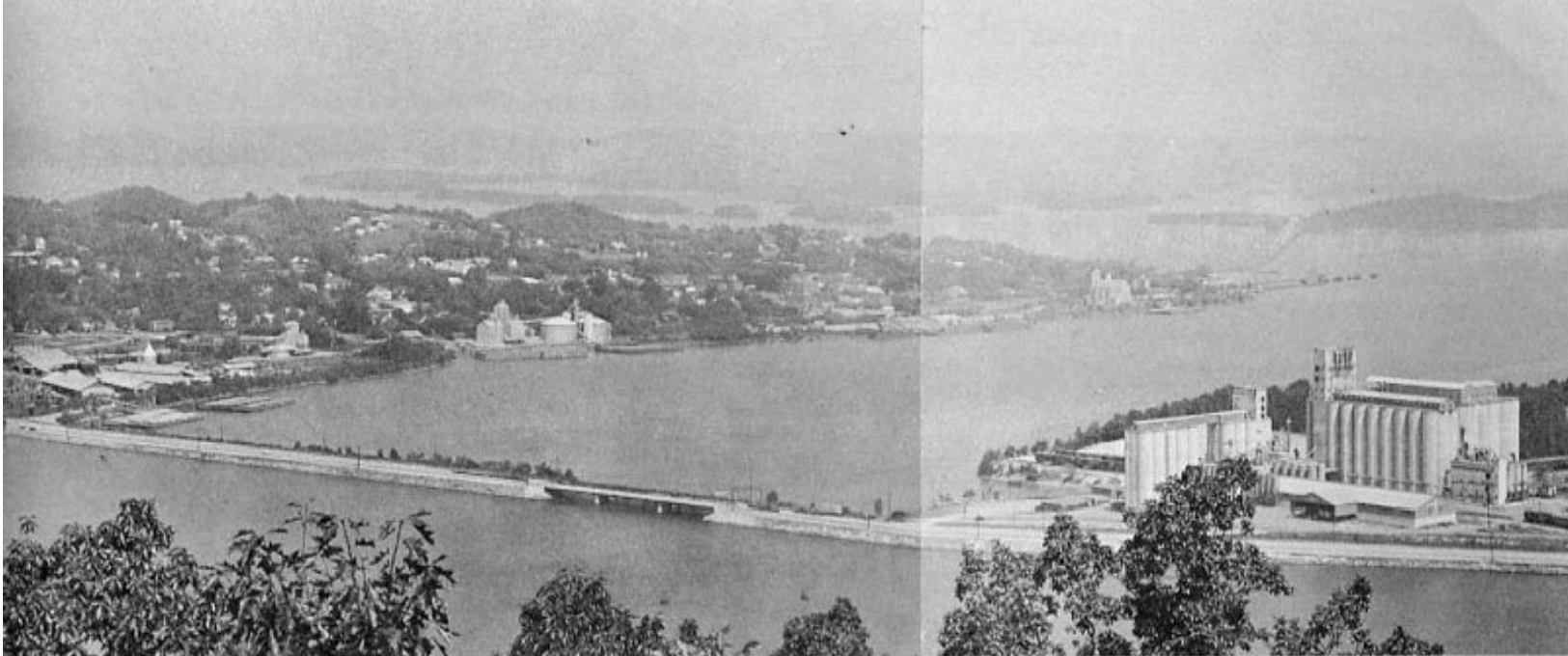
This was the first time for the giants of speed to race this far south. Unlimited hydroplanes were rather new to the Guntersville JC's but boat racing certainly was not. For the past 24 years this lake and the city of Guntersville has been the home of the south's finest boat races. In 1961 the APBA held their Stock

Outboard Nationals here, and in 1962 the JC's completely out did themselves by holding two National Championships in two weeks! First they held the Limited Inboard National Championships. Then with two days of rest they held the Stock Outboard National Championships, which draw in the excess of 300 boats every year. Also in 1962 this little town of 6,500 people got another ride to fame when Roy Duby driving U.S. Equipment Co. owned *Miss US 1* set a new unlimited hydroplane straight-a-way record at 200.419 mph. Guntersville is also the home of several stock outboard competition and straight-a-way records. After the experience with Roy Duby and *Miss US 1* the JC's knew they would not be content until they held an unlimited race.

An interesting highlight of the annual boat race festival is the beauty contest where 60 of the top beauty's from all over the state of Alabama vie for honors and the right to represent the state in the "Miss

Sun and Fun" contest which is held at Myrtle Beach, South Carolina each year. Miss Ginger Poitivent, a contestant in the 23rd boat race festival, went on to win the "Miss Sun and Fun" contest for 1962 becoming "Miss Sun and Fun USA". Sandra Howell, Miss Guntersville Lake of 1962 represented Alabama at Myrtle Beach this year. Linda Vaughn of Annistor, Alabama is this year's Miss Guntersville Lake and will represent the state in next year's "Sun and Fun contest". This project is ably handled by the Guntersville Jayceettes.

Qualifying runs got underway Thursday June 20 with *Miss Bardahl* being one of the first boats to arrive. Each boat, in order to qualify, had to average 90 mph or better for the 2½ mile course before the deadline Saturday evening. *Miss Bardahl* became the solid favorite when she established an average speed of 112.500 mph for the two and one half mile course. Others touring the course in the excess of 100 mph were; Chuck



CITY OF BOAT RACING UNLIMITED

Thompson in *Taboe Miss* averaging 109.756, *Gale V* driven by "Wild" Bill Cantrell turned in 105.386 qualifying time. The California boat *Dollar Bill* (*\$ Bill*) driven by Norm Evans averaged 104.167. *Miss US 5* qualified at the speed of 103.448 driven by Don Wilson.

There were several close calls in the qualifying runs and during the race. One of the closest was when Warner Gardner flipped the *Notre Dame* during a practice run Saturday. Luckily neither the boat nor driver were hurt and the *Notre Dame* had already qualified for the finals Sunday.

Sunday morning found the pits bustling with activity despite the rain. Umbrellas, rain coats, and boots were the order of the day. The rain slacked off enough by 10:30 so that the *Notre Dame* was able to go out on the course to test it's new engine. The mechanics gave a sigh of relief as the blue and white, Allison-powered, boat roared to life. Their night of work had not been in vain. The





At the start of heat 1A Gale was first. However Bardahl took an early lead and went on to win. Miss Tahoe was 3rd.



ABOVE: Last years "Miss Guntersville Lake", Sandra Howell, gave up her crown to the 1963 queen (below) Linda Vaughn from Anniston, Alabama.



ABOVE: Notre Dame hangs in suspension as the crew drains out the saturated hull.
BELOW: Warner F. Gardner prepares to take the Notre Dame out for a shakedown run after spilling the day before.





Miss Tahoe and \$ Bill go into a turn. Both boats made a good showing. \$ Bill was the winner of heat 2A.



The pits were kept humming with activity, and the cranes operated continually.

\$ Bill goes out to try a new prop which was flown in special for the Gunter-ville course.



Lee Schoenith (left); Vice President of A.P.B.A. Unlimited class, and Bill Cantrell, driver of Gale, talk shop.

boat that was upside down Saturday was again ready for action.

The only boat that failed to make the starting field was Bernie Little's *Tempo*. This is the same name which was used by the famed band leader Guy Lombardo in his racing days. The new *Tempo* still carries his name. Tommy Chatfield was to be the driver of this unique, four-seat, unlimited racing hydroplane. Motor trouble kept this sleek craft on its trailer.

In drawing for heats *Bardabl*, *Gale V*, and *Taboe Miss* were grouped for heat 1-A. Ron Musson in *Miss Bardabl* gave evidence of things to come as he had little trouble with either *Gale V* or *Taboe Miss*, averaging 102.700 for the 15 miles. *Gale V* driven by Bill Cantrell was second with a 100.259 and *Taboe Miss* third averaging 81.942.


Heat 1-B was a comedy of errors. Although the boats were spread out all over the course before one lap was completed, the winner was not

early in the race.

Heat 2-B was the fastest heat of the day as Bill Cantrell forced Ron Musson to extend the full speed of *Miss Bardabl*. Going into the first turn Cantrell held the inside spot with Musson matching his turn, bow for bow. As they came out of the turn it looked as if Cantrell might be able to upset the favorite as the *Gale* boat seemed to have a little extra acceleration. But, at the end of the back-stretch Musson caught him and again made the turn side by side. Coming out Musson took just enough lead so Cantrell could not hold him to the outside on the following turn. This lost some time for the *Gale* boat, but the determined Cantrell began to work his way back up. He could not quite match the speed of the Jones designed boat of Musson's. *St Regis* finished third.

The Governors Trophy Race was a crowd pleaser. Grouped very well all four boats hit the first turn as a unit. Seeing four of these monsters in a turn was enough to bring every spectator to his feet. As usual Musson brought the green and black *Miss Bardabl* out on top, closely followed by *§ Bill*, *Gale*, and *Notre Dame*. At this point it was anyone's race, for *§ Bill* was turning the same speed as *Bardabl* and *Gale*, with *Notre Dame* only about four mph off the pace. On the third lap Cantrell began his bid for second place and might have caught *§ Bill* were it not for the fact that halfway through the back straight Cantrell's boat suddenly took a leap in the air and came down nose heavy. It took off again with progressively smaller jumps as Cantrell was able to check the speed of the big boat. I did not have a chance to talk to "Wild Bill" after the race to find out just what had happened but evidently he was rather "shook up" by the events for it was several seconds before he got his wits together and started the big boat up again. While this was happening *Notre Dame* passed the *Gale* boat. Cantrell made his recovery quickly and again overtook *Notre Dame* and moved back into third spot where he finished behind *Bardabl* and *§ Bill*, and ahead of *Notre Dame*.

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Bardahl and *Gale* put on a terrific battle for first.

evident until the last $\frac{1}{4}$ mile. At the start Don Wilson driving *Miss US 5* took an early lead followed by *§ Bill*, *Notre Dame*, and then *St Regis*. At the first turn of the second lap *§ Bill* driven by Norm Evans almost spun out while trying to hold off *Notre Dame* who was pushing to gain second place. As Evans was regaining control, *Notre Dame* speed past and it was not until the third lap that Evans was able to catch and pass the *Notre Dame* boat regaining second spot behind Don Wilson. Here again tough luck set in. *§ Bill* had not quite gone the length of the course when his blower went to pieces. This again put Gardner and *Notre Dame* in second place almost a lap behind the fast moving *Miss US 5*. On the back straight-a-way Wilson passed and lapped *St Regis* and in the final turn caught *Notre Dame*. Here is where Wilson made his fatal mistake, going into the turn behind *Notre Dame*. He had started his bid to pass on the outside, but suddenly changed his mind. He cut for the inside and in the process caught some of *Notre Dame's* rooster

tail and drowned out. Here he sat, helplessly trying to start the wet engine, while both *Notre Dame* and *St Regis* completed their final lap passing the still dead boat to finish one - two. Wilson was finally able to restart his engine and finish under his own power over the finish line, a few hundred yards away, for a third spot.

Heat 2-A included *Miss US 5*, *Notre Dame*, *Taboe Miss*, and *§ Bill*. This was the thriller of the day with *Taboe Miss* and *§ Bill* battling it out from the very first turn. *Taboe Miss* had jumped to the early lead over *§ Bill* but was being pushed very hard. In the first turn of the 4th lap *Taboe Miss* spun out and missed a buoy and had to swing back to pick it up. This lost the lead for her and probably the whole race, for in the attempt to correct his mistake, Thompson was a little heavy on the throttle of *Taboe Miss* and lost a blower, cutting a water line in the process just as he crossed the finish line. This gave *§ Bill* first, *Taboe* second, *Notre Dame* third. *Miss US 5* was with engine trouble