

Sleuthing the Dragon

by Jon Osterberg

(Portions of this story appeared in the 1989 edition of *Hydro Legends*.)

Ole Bardahl has unlimited hydroplanes coming and going.

One of Seattle's famed Green Dragons was crated and shipped east yesterday; a new Miss Bardahl will debut next week.

... By this time, the boat that won more races than any other in a long line of Bardahls will be rumbling across the Midwest somewhere on a freight car, headed for Boston and an exhibition tour of New England and the eastern seaboard.

– Excerpt from *The Seattle Times*
“Bardahls Coming and Going,” Saturday, April 8, 1967

You might think it would be hard to lose a 30-foot hydroplane. Not so. That's exactly what happened several years after the article above appeared.

Little did hydro fans suspect that when the third *Miss Bardahl* left home aboard that eastbound train, it was the last time virtually any of them would see the “Green Dragon” for 16 years. A strange odyssey was about to unfold.

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I became a hydro enthusiast at age 4, in 1958. That's when my dad, who lived near Bardahl Manufacturing Corporation in Ballard (a Seattle neighborhood), first took me to see the original Green Dragon. My family loved hydros, and I grew to be a staunch *Bardahl* fan.

A new *Miss Bardahl* (the third) made its debut in July 1962, and I watched it roar to second place in the Gold Cup on Lake Washington a few weeks later. From 1962 to 1966, I idolized the *Bardahl* and Ron Musson, its driver.

Hydroplanes consumed much of my time. Whenever my friends and I raced bikes on our Lake Hills streets towing plywood hydros, mine bore *Bardahl* colors: metallic green (Testors #54 model paint), yellow, black, and white. I also raced *Bardahls* in a wintertime game we invented, casting dice and moving 3-inch cardboard boats around playing cards laid in an oval.

Miss Bardahl was retired after the 1965 season. It had won 12 races, including three straight APBA Gold Cups and national championships. Then, on June 19, 1966, Ron Musson died at the wheel of a new cabover *Miss Bardahl* when it disintegrated during the President's Cup race in Washington, D.C. I was crushed.

Regardless, I remained a hydro nut. Nine years later, in August 1975, I began giving pit tours in Seattle for Unlimiteds Unanimous. Many people asked what became of the third *Bardahl*, so I'd recite the East Coast display story. However, my talks with hydro buffs revealed no one who had seen nor heard of the boat since the early 1970s.

It was hard to believe the most prolific hydro of the 1960s could vanish. I decided to find it. Early in 1979, I organized all the information and rumors I'd heard, trying to chart a pattern of clues. Much of the info was contradictory. That summer in the pits, I asked

the sport's insiders more *Bardahl* questions. I heard lots of conjecture, but nothing concrete.

In February 1980 I phoned Evelyn Manchester, Ole Bardahl's daughter, at the Bardahl plant in Ballard. I explained my search, and she graciously invited me over for a chat. After a grand tour of the facility we sat in her office to talk about the boat. As I understood it, this was Evelyn's story:

Miss Bardahl was given to Bardahl's sales division after the 1965 season for display duty. The boat was shipped to Boston in 1967. Sometime later the Boston and Los Angeles sales divisions merged, which fostered some intra-company problems. A corporate lawsuit followed, during which all company communication went through lawyers. Somehow, Bardahl "lost track of the boat" until a man from the East Coast who had possession of it called Ole Bardahl. The man was restoring the hull and wanted to race it. Ole said no, it's too old and worn to race again. The company went to court to recover it, but the attempt failed.

After the meeting, questions lingered. Who had spoken with Ole? How did the boat look when last seen? What color was it? And where is the boat?

I wrote a story for the April 1980 *Unlimited NewsJournal* that tracked the whereabouts of 43 inactive unlimiteds. Titled "Whistling Through the Boneyards," the story ended with the Green Dragon saga and a plea for anyone with information about its location to step forward. No one did.

That summer, the San Diego race committee ran my "Boneyards" story in its souvenir program. Again I hoped my plea would yield *Bardahl* answers, but again I heard nothing.

Over the winter I nearly gave up. While researching the "Boneyards" article I'd learned that, without proper storage, wooden hydros (like *Bardahl*) can – and do – rot away. Many had been burned. The odds of finding the Dragon intact seemed slim. Still, I questioned people throughout the hydro fraternity. My search became an obsession.

In spring 1981, a man from Detroit phoned. Randy Roe was starting a newsletter for hydro fans. Randy shared my concern for finding *Miss Bardahl* and ran my "Boneyards" article in his first issue. Although no *Bardahl* clues surfaced, we struck up a cross-country friendship that later played a crucial role in finding the boat.

More questions, more false leads, more dead ends. Even if the boat had been destroyed, I figured there must be a witness somewhere who could verify its demise.

Randy Roe called one night in September 1981. He'd just returned from the San Diego race, where he'd struck up a conversation with *Captran Resorts* crew chief Ron Giese. When Randy offhandedly mentioned our *Bardahl* search, Ron perked up, saying he'd met a man a few years earlier in Miami who claimed to own the boat. I thanked Randy and dialed Giese in Fort Meyers, Fla.

Giese said that years earlier, while attending the Miami race, he met an older man who claimed to own the third *Miss Bardahl*. The boat was for sale, but Ron wasn't interested. The man also claimed to own "the largest motorcycle dealer ship in Daytona Beach" and said the *Bardahl* was parked on its trailer outside the cycle shop. Giese couldn't

remember the man's name but thought he had his business card and promised to look for it.

In the following months, I postponed my *Bardahl* search. Giese hadn't called back, and I'd returned to college for a journalism degree. For two quarters I labored to balance a full credit load while working a full-time job. It wasn't until spring break that I found time to go hydro hunting again.

I phoned Giese in Florida. No, he hadn't found the man's business card, but he thought the dealership was for Honda, Yamaha, or Harley-Davidson. He wasn't sure. I phoned the Daytona Chamber of Commerce, explained my search, and asked if someone could mail me photocopies of the Daytona Yellow Pages listing all the motorcycle dealers. Four pages arrived in the mail April 10, 1982.

I called every dealer in the Daytona area, but no one had seen the *Bardahl*. I now owed the phone company a huge long-distance fee and had nothing to show for it.

On April 15, I phoned the *Daytona Beach News-Journal* to run a lost-boat ad under "Motorcycles For Sale." However, the ad manager refused to run my ad in the Motorcycles section. Frustration set in.

The Florida calls had been fruitless. What I needed was less-costly, long-term exposure – something like a "wanted" poster. I created one by gluing a *Bardahl* photo on a sheet of paper with the word "LOST" in bold letters. Below that read:

Miss Bardahl hydroplane. Last seen at a Daytona Beach-area cycle dealership in mid-1970s. 30' long, possibly still painted green and yellow, may be in disrepair. Anyone with information on its whereabouts, please call Jon toll free at (number), 8 to 5 weekdays, Pacific Daylight time. Thanks!

I mailed copies of the poster with a cover letter to the Daytona Chamber of Commerce and every cycle dealer in the Daytona phone book – nearly 50 mailings altogether. Then I waited, hoping for a call but prepared for failure.

By May 18, 1982, I'd decided my silly posters had flopped. Driving to work, my thoughts centered on business and term papers rather than dragons and roostertails. Then came a mid-morning phone call. An unfamiliar voice said, "I understand you're looking for *Miss Bardahl*."

Stunned, I leaned forward and asked the man what he knew.

"*Miss Bardahl* is up at Lake Winnepesaukee, New Hampshire," he said. "The phone number of the guy who owns it is...."

Out of the blue, here was a man – Sammy Packard – who not only knew what the *Bardahl* was, he had the boat's phone number!

Packard lived in Daytona Beach. He'd walked into Robison Harley-Davidson in Daytona at the moment the manager was opening my letter. Noticing the boat on the poster, Packard asked to read it, then phoned from the motorcycle shop.

Incredibly, Packard knew nothing of *Bardahl*'s owner being a Daytona resident, and he'd never seen the boat in town. (I later learned *Miss Bardahl* never had been in Florida

at all.) By sheer coincidence, Packard knew the man he believed owned it – Robert Valpey, who lived 1,350 miles away in Center Harbor, N.H.

Over and over I thanked Packard, who didn't grasp the importance of his call. (It later proved to be crucial: No one else answered my posters.) I was sure I'd found *Miss Bardahl*. It's condition, though, was unknown.

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For two days I tried to reach Robert Valpey. He finally returned my call on May 20. I told him about Sammy Packard and asked if he still owned the *Bardahl*.

My heart sank at his answer: Valpey had never owned the boat. However ... he knew the man who did, and Valpey had seen it five years earlier. Valpey gave me the number for Sam Rogers in Hollis, N.H., and I phoned Sam at 10 p.m. Eastern time.

Rogers was cordial despite the late hour. He talked a blue streak and offered a wealth of information. This is the *Miss Bardahl* story according to Sam Rogers:

Sometime around 1973 or 1974, word came that Bardahl was closing its packaging plant in Norwood, a Boston suburb. Everything in the warehouse eventually was sold except one item – *Miss Bardahl*. Ole instructed the Norwood staff either to put the boat in a museum or destroy it.

When Rogers heard about the *Bardahl* he drove down to Norwood with a friend, "just to have a look." (Rogers already owned some boats, including *Juno*, "the first hydroplane with sponsons to compete against the step hulls," Rogers said.) When they arrived the warehouse was empty except for the Dragon, which sat on its hydraulic trailer. The boat was beautiful, still shiny and wearing its original green and yellow colors.

Inside the office, Rogers and the plant manager began talking but were interrupted by an emergency phone call: The manager's son had been in a bike accident. Hurriedly, he introduced Rogers to a man named Laterno (or Letourneau), who had been hired as the comptroller to liquidate Bardahl property. Then the manager rushed off.

Rogers asked Laterno how much he wanted for the boat and was told "around \$10,000." Rogers said that was way too high, thanked him for his time, and walked out. Just as Rogers reached his pickup truck, Laterno ran up from behind and said, "OK, I'll give it to you for \$3,500." Rogers and his friend pooled their money. Although he couldn't remember the exact price, Rogers thinks they bought the boat for \$1,500.

Back inside the plant, Laterno typed a crude bill of sale that read, "Sold, to Sam Rogers for \$1,500. *Miss Bardahl* U-40 hydroplane and trailer. This boat may not ever be raced." Rogers signed the paper, handed over the money, and hauled *Bardahl* to his New Hampshire home, where it remained under cover the entire time Rogers owned it.

Sometime in 1975 Rogers got a call from Ole Bardahl, who until then had been unable to trace his old hydroplane. Ole never had intended for

the boat to be sold. He told Rogers, "It's mine, and I want it back." Rogers said, "Fine, I'll sell it back for what I paid for it – \$1,500." Ole refused to "pay for something he already owned." Rogers pointed out he had a legal bill of sale for it. Ole cut the conversation short, telling Rogers, "Don't you dare try to race that boat!" That was the last time Rogers heard from Ole.

In 1976, Rogers decided to sell *Miss Bardahl*. One person showed interest, John Sweet. He was a man about 30 years old who would show up at Rogers' house, sit in *Bardahl*'s cockpit, and dream of owning the boat. Rogers finally sold it to Sweet for \$1,500.

Rogers said Sweet still had it "as of two months ago," near Derry, N.H. "The boat is in good shape with the display engine, but no shaft. If you buy it, I'd love to tow it back to Seattle," said Rogers. He told me where Sweet lived and gave me some phone numbers.

I thanked Sam Rogers for all his help. The next day I phoned Sweet, but all the numbers were disconnected except for one, a beauty salon. The woman who answered was aloof but, after some prodding, admitted she was Sweet's sister-in-law. She gave me the phone number for Sweet's mother in Salem, N.H. Sweet, she explained, had no phone of his own.

The next day I reached Mrs. Sweet. I explained I was a writer from Seattle doing a story on *Miss Bardahl* and needed to speak with her son. All she promised was she'd give him my message and number.

For two days I heard nothing. Crazy thoughts came: What if Sweet thought I was a lawyer trying to repossess the boat for Ole? What if he didn't want anyone to know he had the boat? Might he never return my call? Finally, he did. On May 25, 1982, I spoke with the man who owned the third *Miss Bardahl* unlimited hydroplane. This was John Sweet's story:

Sweet lived in Salem, N.H. He'd been involved with hydros a long time, most recently as a Grand Prix-class driver. In 1976, Sweet and his father – the man Ron Giese met in Miami – bought the *Bardahl* from Sam Rogers. The boat was complete, having everything except the rudder. But Sweet dropped any plans to race it when he found dry rot in the left sponson. Instead, he decided to strip the boat, replace the rotten wood, and restore it in "show" condition.

Something else on the boat had to change. Ever since Sweet was in the Army he'd hated the color green. After digging up photos of the 1968 *Bardahl* in old issues of *Powerboat* magazine, he painted his boat – except for the tail and cowlings – in a yellow and black checkerboard design that somewhat resembled the '68 scheme.

Sweet stored the boat indoors. While his custom-auto shop was in business, *Miss Bardahl* hung from the rafters in the warehouse, and more than once Sweet and his co-workers bumped their heads on it. Shortly before May 1982, Sweet sold his business and vacated the warehouse. For the first time in its life, *Miss Bardahl* had no permanent shelter and was

parked outdoors. Sweet had a friend named Bob Mackey (coincidentally, the same name as one of the boat's 1962 builders) who ran a truck/auto body shop in North Salem. Mackey let Sweet park the *Bardahl* alongside the shop.

I told Sweet why I was looking for the boat, at which point he said it was for sale – for \$20,000. I was shocked at the high price. Sweet explained the boat had cost him much time, labor, and inconvenience. He said he'd torn off the decking and replaced it, battens and all, before painting it checkerboard.

That blew my fantasy to pieces. Until then I'd had visions of finding the boat, buying it for \$1,000, towing it home, and repainting it myself. Sweet asked if I wanted to buy it, but I said I had nowhere near that kind of money.

Sweet asked what I'd like to see done with the boat. I said I'd like to see it come home to Seattle where people could pay tribute to it, like *Slo-mo IV* and *Miss Thriftway*.

Sweet said he, too, would like to see the *Bardahl* go home to Seattle and told me to "try and find a buyer." He also said he was willing to trade the *Bardahl* for a 7-litre hydro without an engine. We exchanged phone numbers and hung up. At last, I'd found the Green Dragon ... yet my hopes sagged. Who was going to pay \$20,000 for an antique hydro with rotting sponsons?

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My employer in 1982, Compugraphic Corp., was based in North Reading, Mass. In May of that year a co-worker from the Redmond, Wash. office, George Brennan, visited Compugraphic's home office. I called him and asked if he'd drive north and take pictures of the *Bardahl*; he did so May 26.

Five days later I received the developed slides and, for the first time since August 1965, saw *Miss Bardahl*. It was checkerboard all right, but not an accurate depiction of the 1968 hull. Still, it seemed to be in fine shape.

In the following weeks I talked with many people, trying (unsuccessfully) to round up interest in bringing the *Bardahl* home. On June 16, 1982, I phoned Evelyn Manchester, told her I'd found the boat, described its condition, and suggested she reacquire it for display. She sounded somewhat enthused until I told her Sweet's asking price – \$20,000 or trade. "That's ridiculous," she said. Which it was. I suggested she make a counteroffer or convince Sweet he'd enjoy a nice tax break if he unloaded it for next to nothing.

Evelyn explained it would be hard to store a boat that size but thanked me for the information and said she'd let me know if there was any way *Bardahl* could reacquire the boat. Apparently there wasn't, because I never heard back.

Also in May 1982, a writer learned of my *Bardahl* search through my brother, Dave. C.R. Roberts was the associate editor of *State Magazine*. With the Tri-Cities and Seattle races approaching, he thought a hydro story about my search would be timely.

C.R. Roberts' two-page story with photos appeared in the August 1982 issue of *State Magazine*. "Hydros on my mind: The Quest for *Miss Bardahl*" mentioned the boat was for sale or trade, but no one came forward with an offer.

John Sweet phoned every few weeks during the summer to see if I'd made any progress. I told him politely he'd priced himself out of the market. He made some counteroffers concerning down payments and trades, and finally he said he'd trade the boat straight across for a jet engine. I asked around but found none, and soon Sweet quit calling.

In September 1982, my wife Luanne and I attended the San Diego race. We spent time with Randy Roe and another Detroit friend, Bill Hardy, who knew about my *Bardahl* search. Bill thought the boat belonged in Seattle and made a generous offer: He would give his 1967 national champion 145-class hydroplane to John Sweet, either in trade or as a down payment, for the *Bardahl*. Bill's boat was in running condition, complete with motor, trailer, and a solid coat of paint.

Sweet declined the offer September 29, saying that even a top-flight 145 was worth no more than a few thousand dollars. He told me to keep looking for a jet engine.

At that time life grew hectic again. Fall quarter began at the University of Washington and I spent all my time either at work, school, or doing homework. Nothing developed with *Bardahl* over the winter, and I anguished over the thought of it sitting outside that New Hampshire garage, unprotected from the harsh New England weather. Although this was the first time the boat had ever been unsheltered, I feared that wind, rain, and snow could deteriorate the old wood hull quickly.

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An unexpected break in my quest came in May 1983. A friend at Compugraphic's Massachusetts office, Neil Stewart, subscribed to the Lawrence, Mass., *Eagle-Tribune*. In that newspaper a former Detroit resident, Kathie Neff, wrote a local-interest column. One day Stewart phoned her and suggested she do a story on the *Bardahl*. Neff remembered the boat, having attended Detroit hydro races.

The next morning Neff called, and we spoke for an hour. I'd become aware of Bob Williams' efforts to form the Unlimited Hydroplane Hall of Fame and Museum in Seattle, and I asked Neff to write that the boat would have a home if it returned to the Northwest. On Sunday, June 5, 1983, the *Eagle-Tribune* ran Neff's article, "Long Search for *Miss Bardahl* Ended in Salem."

Not surprisingly, I got a long-distance call June 13. It was John Sweet, whom I hadn't heard from in nearly nine months. "I saw the article in the paper," he said, "and I've been giving this a lot of thought. I'd like to work a deal."

Again, my hopes soared. But was this another false alarm?

"I'm willing to drop my price," said Sweet. "I'm going through a divorce, the boat is starting to deteriorate, and I've got no place to store it. The last thing I want is for that boat to fall apart. I'd like to get about \$5,000 out of it. I've got at least that much invested in time and materials."

Sweet said, after sitting outside all winter, *Bardahl's* deck had delaminated. (Sweet had not fiberglassed it before painting it checkerboard.) He took it off and deemed the remaining wood unblemished. "I'm willing to work in any direction to make a deal for the boat," he said.

The next day Sweet called again. “I thought about this all night long,” he said. “I’m willing to go a step further.” Sweet offered to donate *Miss Bardahl* to the Museum for one dollar, but only if he – not Bardahl Manufacturing Corp. – was credited with donating the boat, and if the agreement was legally documented. By donating the boat, Sweet would enjoy a substantial tax write-off for the next three years.

I phoned Bob Williams with the news. He was thrilled.

Two weeks earlier, I had asked another Redmond co-worker to take current *Bardahl* photos. Bob Allen was at Compugraphic’s North Reading plant for training, and on June 5 he drove up to North Salem and shot a roll of slides.

I met Bob Williams on June 20 at his Burien, Wash. home, where I showed my *Bardahl* slides to him, his wife Shirley, and Stan Hanauer. Stan was encouraged by the boat’s condition and said it would be “no problem” to restore it. Bob said Sea Galley restaurants had offered a generous sum to finance the recovery of the *Bardahl*.

The next day I asked John Sweet to phone Bob Williams. They talked for the first time, and Sweet agreed to donate the third *Miss Bardahl* unlimited hydroplane to the Unlimited Hydroplane Hall of Fame and Museum for \$1.

Williams called two weeks later to say the departure date for his cross-country journey was set. Finally, someone was going to New Hampshire to tow home an icon of boating history and a slice of my past.

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On July 16, 1983, Bob Williams sat in his Burien home with Bob Burd, the Museum’s historian, making last-minute plans to recover *Miss Bardahl*. Early the next morning they would leave for Salem, N.H., in a ¾-ton Ford Super Cab pickup truck generously loaned by Williams’ neighbor, Gene Bolanga.

As Williams and Burd talked, they became antsy. Around 9 p.m. one of them said, “We’ll never get any sleep, we’re too excited. Let’s go now!” And so they did.

To avoid bad weather in the northern states, they traveled south to Portland, east to Pendleton, Boise, and Ogden, and then onto Interstate 80. When one of them grew tired he’d crawl in the back and sleep for two or three hours while the other drove. They pressed on at 65 mph through sweltering heat that topped 100 degrees. The truck had no air conditioning.

“After about 48 hours, boy, did we smell!” said Williams.

Towns and cities whizzed by: Cheyenne, Lincoln, Des Moines, Chicago. They stopped for gas only at places that sold burgers and fast food. From Toledo they followed Interstate 90 through Erie, Buffalo, Syracuse, and Worcester, then turned north to Salem, N.H., home of John Sweet and *Miss Bardahl*.

It was Monday morning, July 17, when they turned onto a rural, dirt road near Interstate 93. They had driven straight through from Burien in 60 hours, 5 minutes. Suddenly, the bleary-eyed travelers caught a glimpse of a boat through tall firs. Williams let out a yell and said, “My gawd, there it is!”

Miss Bardahl was parked outside Sweet's fiberglass shop. No one was there. After looking around, the fragrant wayfarers found a motel nearby and checked in. "We each took a two-hour shower, changed clothes, relaxed, and ate a good meal at a nice restaurant," Williams said. As planned, he then phoned Museum adviser George McKernan and asked him to catch the next flight from Seattle to Boston.

The next morning, Williams met McKernan at the Boston airport while Burd began rewiring *Bardahl's* trailer. All its tires, mounted on old-style split rims, were flat. Surprisingly, the hydraulic lift worked perfectly.

Williams had heard New Englanders are unfriendly. "Not true," he said. "I've never been treated any nicer. Once people found out we were that far from home and needed help, they were wonderful. Nobody will ever convince me New Englanders are aloof."

Chandler Serv Inc., a Salem tire dealer, sold the men four wheels, inner tubes, and tires at cost. A man at Northeast Welding in Salem opened his shop one night, worked three hours, and charged just \$30 for materials and labor.

McKernan, Burd, and Sweet had a rough time rewiring the lights, delaying the trip home by a day. While the others struggled with the trailer, Williams scoured the property for boat parts. He found them buried in the weeds and scattered throughout Sweet's shop – *Bardahl's* seat, windshield, steering wheel, magneto, carburetor, fuel pump, engine stacks, and more.

The tail section also lay outside. Bob nailed it to the hull with roofing nails, then roped it down. *Bardahl's* Rolls-Merlin engine was loaded into the truck bed.

Sweet wrote a bill of sale, then gathered his receipts and drove everyone into town, where *Miss Bardahl's* sale to the Museum was notarized. Williams handed Sweet \$1. "John autographed the dollar and gave it back to us," Williams said. "He was great, a real nice guy."

At last Williams, McKernan, and Burd hooked up the trailer and headed home with *Miss Bardahl*.

Seven miles down the road, one of the new tires went flat. They mounted the spare, an old split-rim, then stopped and had the new tire repaired. They never remounted it, though, and it was the spare that eventually took them all the way to Seattle.

Just into Massachusetts, a strong side wind hit. Burd hollered and the others turned to see *Bardahl* lifting off the trailer more than a foot. They stopped, tied a huge rope around the hull and trailer, and continued on.

The men stayed in motels every night, traveling 12 hours per day. One evening they stopped at a toll booth on the Ohio Turnpike. The toll-taker eyed them dubiously and said, "You owe \$7.20, but you ain't going nowhere until you tell me what that is." "It's a race boat," they said, laughing.

Nearing Chicago at rush hour, they almost got stuck on an exit ramp that funneled traffic downtown. Williams cut off a few cars as he veered over to the through-lanes. "If we'd have taken that exit, we never would have gotten out of town until 10 p.m.," McKernan said.

When the men reached Ogden and realized it was Tuesday of Columbia Cup week, they decided to detour through Tri-Cities. Pushing on to Seattle would leave them too tired to return for the race. On Wednesday, July 27, 1983, they arrived at Columbia Park and got permission to park behind the pits near the motorhomes.

Chuck Hickling approached Bob Williams as soon as Williams pulled in with the boat. After inspecting *Bardahl*'s display engine, Hickling offered to assemble another motor in exchange for it. Although the Dragon's dash 9 Rolls-Merlin was considered junk after throwing a rod in 1965, Hickling said it was in mint condition "compared with what we weld together nowadays."

Race officials came by two hours later. "The old-timers remembered *Miss Bardahl* and went nuts," Williams said. "They told us, 'We want her inside the pits, out on the line.' So that's what we did."

One of my biggest thrills was watching former *Bardahl* crew chief Leo Vanden Berg's face when he saw his old boat for the first time in nearly 18 years. The once-proud hull, resembling a skeleton without its deck, sat at the west end of the pits next to the current hydro fleet. Seeing the boat kindled many of Leo's memories, and he told fascinating stories that weekend.

Following the Columbia Cup, Williams towed *Miss Bardahl* westward over the boat's old Interstate 90 stumping grounds – past Ellensburg, over Snoqualmie Pass, and across the Lake Washington Floating Bridge near the site of her third Gold Cup win in 1965. The Green Dragon was home in Seattle at last.

Gene Bologna's truck had run perfectly. It never overheated or used any oil the entire 7,014-mile journey. Altogether the trip cost the Museum \$3,500 including repairs, gas, food, and motels.

Williams pulled up to his Burien house, got out of the truck, and gazed at the rickety old boat. It had no deck. The battens (horizontal wood strips under the deck) were decaying and cracked. Dry rot gnawed at the entire left sponson. Corrosion covered the aluminum sheathing.

There was much work to do.

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Miss Bardahl had been gone 16 years, was found after a three-year search, and returned to Seattle. That alone was reason to celebrate. But after the excitement of the "rescue mission" had worn off, a cold fact remained: *Bardahl* was more of an emaciated albatross than a revered Green Dragon.

After months of searching for a workshop to cosmetically restore the boat, Williams and the Museum staff settled on a warehouse in Maltby, Wash. The rural location – 24 miles northeast of downtown Seattle – required long commutes for the work crew, but the facility was good and the rent reasonable at \$500 per month. On Feb. 1, 1984, *Miss Bardahl* moved in.

Mike Allen borrowed a crane from Woodinville Lumber to lift the boat off its trailer, which Burd made his special project. For the next several weeks, Burd lived on-site in his motorhome, repairing the trailer and working on the Green Dragon.

McKernan, crew chief for many top-notch hydro teams in the 1950s, '60s, and '70s, set up a work plan and supervised the project in its early months. The first task was to remove the few remaining deck pieces and all rotten wood, sand and clean what remained, and repair most of the boat's battens. Key players were Burd, Norm Arndt, Dale Dutton, Harvey McLemore, and Dick Schlemmer.

Meanwhile, Hickling and Mike Baxter set to work rebuilding and painting a Rolls-Merlin display engine at Chuck's Bellevue home.

Williams, Bob Banker, and June Banker toiled inside the hull weekdays, staining and varnishing wood. Roger Newton joined the team at that point and proved to be vital. Everyone who volunteered helped ensure success, but Newton and Schlemmer in particular logged monstrous hours and effort.

Once the framework was sound, workers flipped the boat and started on its bottom. Dutton, McLemore, Newton, Schlemmer, Williams, and Rocky Fridell stripped corrosion off the aluminum with buffing wheels and high-grit compound. Schlemmer and Williams stripped and buffed the nontrips on the afterplane to a mirror finish – a tedious job that took four days per side.

Newton, Schlemmer, and Burd rebuilt the sponsons. The left one was especially decayed, being the lowest and wettest point when the boat sat tilted on its trailer. Then Schlemmer and Stan Hanauer installed a new deck of ¼-inch mahogany plywood.

Tim Ramsey, an *Atlas Van Lines* crewmember at the time, gave Schlemmer a two-night crash course on laying fiberglass. With help from Tim and Jim Olson, Schlemmer sealed the deck. Next came Newton's and Schlemmer's never-ending task of filling imperfections with Bondo and sanding by hand with wet/dry sandpaper.

Until then, I hadn't joined the *Bardahl* restoration project. From September 1983 to June 7, 1984, I was strictly a college student, taking as many as 21 credits per quarter at the UW. I'd quit my job so I could cram four quarters' worth of classes into three quarters and get my B.A. in journalism. The day after graduation, I drove out to Maltby to check on the boat.

By now Newton and Schlemmer had become the primary crewmembers. Newton worked on *Miss Bardahl* every day he wasn't on call as a Renton firefighter, and Schlemmer worked every night after working all day at his regular job. Both used vacation time for the project.

Newton and Schlemmer asked me to help them get the *Bardahl* finished before the July 29 Tri-Cities race. I was thrilled! Not only had I found my favorite boat after a three-year search, I now was going to help with its cosmetic restoration.

For the next five weeks I worked 10 hours a day, six days a week on *Miss Bardahl*. We primed it, filled imperfections, and sanded, sanded, sanded. Then we repeated the process. Over the July 4 holiday, Newton and Schlemmer sprayed the boat with its familiar green and yellow paint. Outside the warehouse, Bob Banker painted the rebuilt trailer.

Leo Vanden Berg provided photos showing *Miss Bardahl*'s original paint scheme. John Mason, the Museum's talented illustrator, spent two days outlining, masking, and painting the boat's monikers and U-numbers.

Kirk Pagel helped around the shop and brought a sign painter, John Masterson, who hand-painted small lettering and the Bardahl detective to the boat's cowling and tail. And I had the honor of penciling and masking the "scallops" on the bow. (The original scallops had irregular curves, an imperfection that always bothered me. Mine, I thought, were better.)

Mason, Pagel, and I took turns sitting behind the boat's steering wheel, posing for photos like a bunch of 10-year-olds. Then Newton shot the boat with several coats of clear paint. Dutton and Olson installed the cowlings, tail, and cockpit.

Five days before the Gold Cup, Mike Allen lifted the hydro out of the warehouse with a crane and set it on its trailer. Then he lowered the Rolls-Merlin into its engine bay. Magically, that familiar old profile returned. *Miss Bardahl* looked exactly like she did in her racing days – sleek, sturdy, sparkling in the sunlight.

Several people joined us that evening to buff and polish the hull with rubbing compound and give it a thorough wash. At dusk a motorcyclist drove past on the highway nearby, raised his fist and shouted, "*Miss Bardahl* ... all RIGHT!"

On Wednesday, July 25, 1984, Ole Bardahl and Evelyn Manchester rechristened *Miss Bardahl* at a ceremony in front of the Sea-First Tower in downtown Seattle. The volunteer Museum crew stood proudly as newspaper reporters and TV cameramen recorded the long-awaited event.

The next morning *Miss Bardahl* hit the road for Tri-Cities. She occupied the same spot in the pits as the year before, when she was little more than a ragged hulk. After the Gold Cup, the boat returned to Seattle and was displayed at Stan Sayres Pits during Seafair race week.

The following months found *Miss Bardahl* taking part in fairs, parades, exhibits, and fund-raisers. After years in limbo, she had embarked on what's hoped to be a long display career.

With proper upkeep from a caring Museum staff, and shelter provided by a permanent Museum facility, the Green Dragon should excite hydroplane fans for generations to come.

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