

performance

by Mark Rotharmel



The Mighty Quinn



Ted Quinn (right) and driver Dick Miller (left) display a championship season of trophies beside their 16-foot Checkmate, Old Gold.

Good things happen to great people. On January 18, Edward "Ted" Quinn was inducted into Canada's Boating Hall of Fame at a well-attended ceremony held during the Toronto International Boat Show. Surrounded by family and friends, this pioneer of Canadian performance boating humbly accepted his well-deserved lifetime achievement award.

During the growth years of outboard performance, Ted Quinn was Canada's king of speed. The 1960s and '70s marked

a time when horsepower offerings climbed like temperature readings in the mid-day sun, and having been granted one of the country's first Mercury dealerships in 1949, Ted wisely used his entrepreneurial skills and business connections to satisfy his customer's go-fast needs.

Born to a family that ran a small aluminum boat rental business and gas dock on Lake Simcoe in Pefferlaw, Ont., it was Ted Quinn's move to Toronto in 1957 that brought him fame within the boating community. Many still recall his small shop on Laird Avenue, adjoining brother Tom's successful engine and tooling business. It was here that in less-complicated times customers and associates alike would sit for hours to talk about boats,

continued on next page

outboard motors and life on and off the water.

While the business grew, so did Quinn's passion for boat racing. As a driver, team owner and a consultant to Team Mercury, Ted Quinn won championships, set speed records and supported the Canadian Boating Federation. His name can be found on several world records, including one in the FJ class, set with a 110-hp Mercury clamped to the stern of an Alison Craft appropriately named Black Magic.

Racing fans with good memories may still remember some of Ted's drivers, including several who worked for Ted as marine mechanics. Dick Miller was one of the most successful, tearing up the lakes in Old Gold, a Mercury-powered 16-foot Checkmate. Don Johnson, Norm Wilson, Harold Wilkinson and Barry Taylor were also prominent hot shoes of the time and together with other racers sponsored in whole or part by Ted Quinn Marine, claimed their share of checkered flags.

It was Ted who put me into the seat of my first race boat back in 1971. As he did for many others, Quinn showed me how to win. His ability to improve a boat's set-up or suggest a different driving strategy came from years of traveling to major races. He became friends with the best in the business – those sitting in cockpits and in leather boardroom chairs.

At the 1970 Outboard World Championships held at Lake Havasu, Arizona, Ted Quinn's sharp eye noticed smoke billowing from the back of the leader's boat, a twin-Mercury-powered Molinari driven by Jim Merton, (who at one time held the outboard world speed record at over 136 mph). Ted immediately ran down to Merton's pit to inform the Mercury powers-that-be. Since Merton was about to start day two of the race, the crew quickly checked it over but time denied them a chance to fix what Quinn thought was power-trim related.

Merton lined up with more than 100 of the world's fastest outboard-powered boats that morning, comfortably in the lead after day one. As the race wore on, slowly but surely Merton's trim failed and his lead slipped away. Merton was ultimately passed by race winner Bill Sirois, but fortunately finished second overall. Quinn, having bet on Merton to win,

place or show in a high-stakes Calcutta held days before the race, still came out smiling. He and his friends had placed a small bet that paid off large, and paid for their trip to Arizona.

As the prominent Canadian Mercury dealer of his era, Ted Quinn worked hard and played hard with prominent names in the marine trade, including a tireless competitor himself, the founder of Mercury Marine, Carl Kiekhaefer. His associations led to friendships with many business leaders, and Ted enjoyed the spoils of his labour.

By the late 1960s, Ted Quinn Marine had become the premier service centre for outboard performance. The famous Prop Shop opened, and together with his talented propeller expert

John Beer, the business took yet another giant leap. By 1972, the company had outgrown its modest roots and a brand new facility was opened on Kennedy Road in Agincourt.

Through the years that followed, Quinn's penchant for competition grew to include an ownership stake in a Junior B hockey team and a winning Mercury Sno-Twister snowmobile venture. Sons Terry, Tim and Teddy were a part of that life, and though perhaps less famous than Quinn's star players Glenn Healy and Joe Nieuwendyk, the boys, daughters Diana and Susan, and Sue, his loving wife of 45 years, made him a proud man.

It was 1979 when Quinn, backed by years of experience on and off the race course, launched Panther Boats, a high-performance boat manufacturing company. Having brought Checkmate boats to Canada a decade earlier, he knew how to build a better mousetrap. To be expected, his customers loved the speedy and sporty runabout models.

Never one to stand still, this was also the year he consolidated his business and

relocated the storefront to the family property in Pefferlaw. Back on Lake Simcoe, Ted and his brother Tom together built a brand new showroom and service centre which operates today as Quinn's Marine. Being a family-run business, the fact that Ted's 80-year-old mother was still pumping fuel to customers from her dock on the Black River, seemed like another good reason to relocate.



Legendary Tunnel Boat Racers Billy Seebold (front right) and world record holder Jim Merton (back left) share some laughs with Ted Quinn (front Centre) during a Mercury dealer meeting in Florida.



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