



# Styled in Fiberglass

Fall Edition 2001

The Official Publication of the Chris Craft Commander Club

www.commanderclub.com

## Drummond Island Meet: A Huge Success

by Curt Radford, MD

The **Chris Craft Commander Club (CCCC)** is an affiliate of the **Chris Craft Antique Boat Club**. The club was founded, on the internet, in early 2000 by Todd Heinrich with the help of a few others including our internet advisor Robert Cutchins. We now have two web pages and 226 members. We have an active internet email server that allows all the members to send one email and communicate with the entire group.

Over the past year and a half, we have made many friends and exchanged a lot of information on the fiberglass Commanders made from 1964 to 1972. In addition, we have a publication **STYLED IN FIBERGLASS** that goes out to all the members. Membership is free.

Because of the strong friendships and commraderie the email group developed, the CCCC held its first, annual rendezvous at the Drummond Island Resort in upper Michigan August 10th-12th. We had a total of seven Commanders brave the rough waters to get there and had a total of about 40 people attending, many came by car or by plane. The resort is a very rustic facility that used to serve as Domino's Corporate retreat. The quality of the accommodations and food was outstanding but the location in the north woods was even better!

The event was organized by Mark and Mike Young with the help of author and Char Pike. Commanders started arriving on Thursday and kept coming as late as Saturday afternoon. Friday night events consisted of a welcoming cocktail reception followed by an excellent banquet with baked white fish as the main

entree. On exhibit was a table with all the Chris Craft literature on the Commanders from 1964-1972 including sales catalogs, option lists, and price lists.

Following dinner, we heard a very informative talk on the Commander line of cruisers by fellow member Joe Attura who flew in from Maine to talk with us. He traced the Commander series from the breakthrough 38 Commander to the gigantic 60 Commander with an excellent slide show presentation. Joe was 9 years old when he attended the 1964 New York Boat Show with his Dad. He vividly described the surprise showing there of the new 38 Commander and the big stir she created. His father subsequently bought one and a life long love affair between Joe and the Commander developed. Joe has owned 35 and 47 Commanders and now is looking for a 55 Commander. He is a walking Commander encyclopedia and we all benefitted greatly by hearing his informative talk.

Saturday morning brought a beautiful, cool, calm, sunny day. Following an excellent breakfast buffet at the Pins Bar and Grill, the attendees flowed down to Yacht Haven Marina for a tour of the Commander Fleet there. Moored at the harbor were the following yachts:

- 1) **GROSSE ISLE**, a 1967 38 Commander Express owned by Todd and Susan Heinrich.
- 2) **GOIN' GOOD**, a 1968 35 Commander Express owned by George and Catherine McKay
- 3) **SUMMER SONG**, a 1967 38 Commander FB Sedan owned by Ron and Pat Smoker.
- 4) **IN COMMAND**, a 1969 38 Commander FB Express owned by Mark and Deb Young.
- 5) **CHARLENE II**, a 1964 38 Commander Express owned by David and Char Pike.
- 6) **KRYS'S CRAFT**, a 1971 38 Commander Express owned by John and Krys Westcott.
- 7) **ISABELLA MARIE**, a 1968 38 Commander express owned by Ron View Jr.

There erupted a panoramic scene of socializing, proud owners showing off of their boats, and cameras clicking-documenting the big event. While the ladies checked out the galleys and salons, the guys spent most of their time on their hands and knees in the engine rooms and lazerettes!

Saturday noon rolled around and everyone headed up to the

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# from the b o a r d

Greetings from sunny Florida. I am Mike Crikis, Governor and keeper of the official **Commander Club Registry**. The registry is a document that the club maintains to keep count of members and their boats. It lists vital information that can be used by the officers and fellow members upon request. Some of the information, such as address and phone number is only for club use, i.e. the mailing list or a very specific need for contact.

Other parts of the registry are there to benefit you and other club members. Requests such as who lives in my area, who has my type of boat or engine. Requests for information from potential members and owners referred to the online list, and also possible contact with others with direct and specific concerns or questions. I often get requests for these types of contacts, and hopefully can put members in touch with each other.

The registry also tracks hull numbers. and is trying to find as many of the Commanders as possible. A recent example in the value of this Club benefit, involves the owner of the Commander manufactured immediately before mine. I discovered the close hull numbers when he signed on with the Club. It was interesting to see the photographs and compare similarities, while noting some surprising differences.

The registry includes the following information:

- ◆ Boat year and length
- ◆ Boat length style (hardtop, fly bridge, sedan, sport fish)
- ◆ Owners Name and address, phone number, email address
- ◆ The boats name, hull number, and power plant
- ◆ And the boats home port

If you're working on that holding tank, and can't quite figure how to fit it, you can use the registry to contact a member with the same set up. Do you want to meet other Commanders in your area? You can use the registry to find them.

The Commander Club actively recommends everyone signing up on the registry. It's free and it's easy. All you need to do is send the information to me (crikismt@aol.com) or one of the other board members. The list will not be sold or distributed, and no personal information will be given out, such as phone number or address, without your specific consent. Primary contact is given to other members through email addresses. I hope to see you all in the Registry.

Thanks  
Mike Crikis (1968-35')

**COMMANDER CLUB OBJECTIVE:** The Chris Craft Commander Club's objective is to promote and preserve the legacy of these fine fiberglass cruisers, as designed by Fred MacKerer and Dick Avery for the Chris Craft Corporation during the years between 1964 and 1972.

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**STYLED IN FIBERGLASS** is published four times a year in March, June, September and December by the Chris Craft Commander Club, a not-for-profit organization. Members are urged to contribute articles and bits of information. Deadline for receiving contributions is the 10th of the preceding month for that issue. Late contributions are subject to editing as deemed necessary. An attempt will be made to return all material where the author so requests, but no guarantee is implied. Please send all contributions to: Robert Cutchins, 215 Idlewood Ave., Portsmouth, Virginia 23704, Email: admin@commanderclub.com

**NOTICE:** While we fully believe that the material represented is completely factual; neither the Commander Club nor its officers can be held responsible for the content of this newsletter.

# from the e d i t o r

## TO JOIN THE CHRIS CRAFT COMMANDER CLUB:

Log onto the Internet, and navigate to [www.commanderclub.com](http://www.commanderclub.com) and browse to the Commander Club webpage. Complete the Registry entry form (Mailing). The information supplied will only be used for Commander Club purposes, and will not be given or sold to any third party. If you are unable to join via the Internet, please send your name, address, boat year/size to our Registrar, *Mike Crikis, 1385 Hannah Drive Merritt Island, FL 32952, 321-452-4895.*

## TO JOIN THE E-MAILING LIST

YahooGroups, a popular Internet search engine and map system, hosts the Commander Club's Mailing List. Joining is simple. From the Commander Club website, enter your email address into the appropriate box, and click "JOIN". A confirmation email message will be sent to you instructing you to respond in a certain fashion, affording you the opportunity to join the mailing list.

## TO ORDER A "CLASSIC LIBRARY" CD-ROM DISK

The Commander Club offers computer users a unique and ideal way to access vintage catalogs, user manuals, pictures and other objects of interest via their home computer. All this information is housed on one CD-ROM, and accessible using Microsoft Windows 9X, ME, XP and 2000, along with UNIX/Linux and Macintosh systems. To order a CD-ROM, send a \$5 check or money order to: *Robert Cutchins, 215 Idlewood Avenue, Portsmouth, Virginia, 23704-1525*

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## PRINTING SERVICES PROVIDED BY:

Lee and Jodie Dahlen

Our newsletter this month is packed. As I've mentioned so often, I start each issue wondering where the content is going to come from, and end up wondering how I'm going to get it all in there. This edition is no exception.

First, you may notice a slight change in the appearance of this month's newsletter. I'm always on the lookout for new design techniques that I think might work in the publications I do (at work, at home, etc.). I hope you like what you see.

Second, this edition is larger. The stories, editorials and technical pieces were well-written, and needed very little editing on my part. I felt content certainly took precedence over size considerations. So, you're holding a newsletter that is 4 pages larger than our earlier editions.

Thirdly, we introduce Lee Dahlen's "Tech Tips" column. Having served as a marine mechanic, boat hauler, boat salesman and a host of other marine-related jobs, he always has something useful to add to any conversation. And so we've allotted space each month for Lee to guide us through issues dealing with maintenance and upkeep of our classic boats.

As winter moves in and we hunker down for a "long winter's nap", let us not forget that list of projects we keep putting off that this winter weather now affords us the time to do. The things we attend to today make those warmer months

more enjoyable, and more relaxed.

Finally, I'd like to take an opportunity to thank all the members whose financial support made this edition of "Styled in Fiberglass" possible, including the printing of this publication provided by Lee and Jodie Dahlen.

Now, sit back and enjoy some of the finest reading you'll find in any boating publication. Curt Radford's account of the Drummond Island Meet, Paul Pletcher's predictions for the CCCC and Lee Dahlen's technical advice. I'm especially excited about presenting Matt

Gurnsey's account in buying his first Commander. It is truly a captivating article, and very well-written.

Now, I'm off to work on that "to do" list for my new "baby", a 1968 31-foot Commander Express, resting comfortably in her new home, here in Portsmouth, Virginia, after a long haul from Chris Craft territory (Pompano Beach, FL).

Regards,  
*Rob Cutchins*

Check us out online at:  
[www.commanderclub.com](http://www.commanderclub.com)



# pletcher's p r e d i c t i o n s

by Paul Pletcher

In the early 1980's I was a founding member of the Dixieland Chapter of the Antique and Classic Boat Society. We were granted 250,000 square miles of jurisdiction for our chapter, encompassing 8 states. Antique and classic boating has traditionally not been a big "sport" in the South, except for some pockets here and there, and of course in Florida, so we were really blazing some trails here in Tennessee and the surrounding mid-South regions.

The density of interest in antique and classic boats is still very much the exception here in the South East rather than the norm found in places like the Thousand Island district of NY, Tahoe, Michigan, etc.

Our first in the water antique boating rendezvous had 7 boats. At one of our early shows, a vintage boat showed up with a Hummingbird fish finder cut into the mahogany dash. During the event the guy apparently "saw the light" or "got the word", because the next year he showed up with a new mahogany dash with a complete set of reconditioned instruments.

As the years passed, the quality of the boats and the quality of the restorations increased immeasurably, and now it is not uncommon to see boats that would be accepted into the Hessel or Clayton shows. One of our boats actually won best of class at Clayton a year or two ago.

I think the same thing will happen with the Commanders as a result of our club activities. There was a really fine representation of boats at the Drummond Island event, and I was impressed with the quality of the boats and the mechanical condition as well. The boat design itself, is noteworthy, and because the design is so special, it attracts people with an eye for this kind of value and style. As a result, there is far less chance that you'll find a Commander that has been cobbled up, in comparison to say, a Sea Ray, Carver or (heaven forbid) a Burnscraft!

The Drummond Island event featured an original model year 38' Commander Express (1964, **Char and David Pike**), which is an especially valuable asset to the club because it documents many of the features found on the original run of Commanders. This is THE boat that caused all of the fuss at the 1964 New York Boat Show. The boat appeared to be in fine original condition, having been repowered with 454's, and had an unusual fiberglass swim platform that was not installed by the factory, but was a Chris Craft dealer installed option (and it fit the boat like a glove).

**Todd and Susan Heinrich's** 38' Express is in remarkable overall condition with original 427 power, and it is obvious that the

boat has been exceptionally well cared for over the years. The equipment found below the engine hatch is in awesome condition too: even the spare propellers have their own holders, and the entire bilge area was "spotless".

**Ron and Pat Smoker's** 38' Sedan FB has been totally restored inside and out, and has been re-powered with turbocharged 350-HP Cat's. Many interior features have been tastefully upgraded, and everything is new, even the custom millwork. This boat is in the same condition you'd pay well over a half million dollars for at the Miami Boat Show, and what you'd get for your money wouldn't have the style or "class" of a 38' Commander. Despite the additional weight of the diesels and a full load of passengers, the boat topped out at a GPS-measured 29 knots (33.06 MPH) during the photo cruise.

**Mark Young's** 38 had a very nicely done teak toe rail and extensive stainless steel work on the flybridge, and was obviously running well with the good sounding 454's. Mark, being in the wood flooring business, has reason to be very proud of the teak work on this boat.

**Jim and Kris Wescot's** boat represents an evolution of the 38' Commander upper deck and cabin design, and for this reason it's a very valuable addition to the fleet. The open plan interior of this boat makes it very comfortable. The McKay's 35 has been repowered with small block Mercruisers and it performed as well as it looked (inside and out). What a surprise it was to see an original condition 35 appearing at Yacht Haven.

**Ron View's** recent 38' Commander Express acquisition is in remarkable original condition and shows tremendous potential. During the rendezvous this boat was found to have true side-oiler 427's, which in this day and age, represents the zenith of 1960's muscle-car engines, and a rare find. A short note about the 427 side-oilers: even the Chevrolet guys will acknowledge this was the finest engine Ford ever built, with special high-nickel iron castings, heavy web reinforcements inside the block, indestructible cross-bolting of the main bearings, expensive casting and milling of the side oil delivery system, and a fine wedge shaped cylinder head. Of our group, only two of us have the side-oiler version of the 427 to my knowledge, Dick Morland and Ron View. I'm sure there are a few more.

Todd Heinrich and I have 427 center-oilers, which are essentially the same as the side-oiler 427 except for the racing type "side-oil" delivery system which feeds main bearings more directly (a gross engineering overkill situation for anything except all-out endurance racing, but very nice if you have it.)

I observed a noteworthy feature on each of the boats attending

# buying your first c o m m a n d e r

by Matt Gurnsey

## December 1996:

At first I don't see it. We have driven down to our marina and where there should be rows of covered slips there are now simply rows of barren docks with wreckage mixed with snow and ice on the docks and floating in the water. I get past the yellow "Caution" tape and enter the gate at the head of our dock. Half way down I see a group of boats floating with metal and wood wreckage sitting on them. Superstructures mangled, they are still afloat. The next dock over I see a 30 Owens resting on it's stern, bow pointing to the sky as the dock rubs the keel away as the tides rise and fall. Our slip is on my right, and rising from the water's icy surface is the bow of our 30' Constellation. Floating on the water are paint cans and other debris from our dock box which is no longer there. There has been so much rain and snow that there is a surface of icy slush on the Puget Sound's salt water. I can see under the water only a few feet and have no idea how badly the boat is damaged. A project when we purchased her, she sat in our driveway for nine months as repairs were made and fresh paint applied to the hull. Less than two months ago the final blue stripe was painted on her side. Too stunned to even cry, I stare at the debris, and notice the Chris Craft logo'd shore power cord that we kept from our last Chris is under water, ruined.

I will later find floating in the water a section from the aft cockpit and side deck that was ripped off the boat. When the boat is raised we will see the horrible destruction as the sheds gave way from the snow's weight. The windshield is gone, the helm station ripped off it's bulkhead, the cabin top cracked across it's top where a roof beam came down on it, and the hardtop support poles have been driven through the deck and bottom of the boat. My wife won't cry until weeks later, when she watches the hulk towed pitifully away. After a few phone calls and estimates it is obvious that the boat will be totaled. Our project comes to an abrupt end.

## August 1996:

A weekend away, just my wife and I. We head for the Washington coast, and Westport, a town she spent much time in as a child. Once a fishing town, the large Port of Westport marina, in the past filled with fishing vessels both commercial and private, now sits with less than two dozen slips used of the hundred there. As we stroll through the tourist trap storefronts, admiring trinkets, artwork and clothing with the town name emblazoned on them, we wander along the shoreline and keep looking out at the nearly empty marina. A boat catches my eye.

"I think that's a Chris Craft." I say pointing toward the ivory toned cruiser.

We decide to wander down the dock and examine her more closely, and discover a faded for sale sign on her side. I copy the number on the calendar page of my checkbook register, and we admire the unique layout through the windows. The fiberglass appeals to us, as it would require less work than the wood boat in the driveway. An interesting boat, we agree that it might have made a great boat for us if we hadn't taken on the 30' Connie. Two boat owners, with a 26 Cavalier in our slip at the marina in addition to the project under the blue tarp, we walk away.



A lost Constellation

Later, when home, I call the owner, and find out he wants \$20,000 for the Chris. Curiosity satisfied, I thank him and hang up. We had leveraged ourselves into debt to get the project boat, which will soon see the water again, and forget about the Westport Chris.

## December 1996:

For Christmas we make the three hour drive to Portland to visit my family. As we leave town, I drive by the 30' Connie, now in her slip, and check to be sure that the bilge pumps are keeping up with the slight seepage that is still occurring, even as the hull swells up. The boat has been in the water almost 3 months, and I am hopeful that come next summer it will be ready to use. Once in Portland, we stay in a hotel, and I pick up a Little Nickel classified paper to read and pass the time. In it is a 1971 31' Chris Craft for \$13,000. I comment to my wife that it must be a real project at that price. The newspaper ends up in my bag, forgotten when we return home.

Then our boat sinks. Upon receiving the decision that the boat will probably be totaled, we begin looking for a replacement. I want to avoid any springtime rush since so many boats have been destroyed in the winter storm. I call on a dozen or more boats in past issues of the Boat Trader and other local magazines, only to be told they are sold.

Reminded of the Chris in the Portland Little Nickel, I protest that it can't be a very good boat, but I'll call. When I finally get a hold of the owner I ask where in Portland the boat is. "It's not in Portland," he says. "It's in Westport." My heart skips a beat, and I tell him I've seen the boat. My next day off is January 1<sup>st</sup>. Could he meet us there to show the boat?

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marina boat shed for grilled burgers and brats with all the trimmings. Cocktails and soft drinks were served. Socializing and boat talk continued with everyone seated outside on picnic tables. This event climaxed when the people across from Dick Morland got up to leave. The poorly constructed, teeter-totter picnic table pitched upward launching Morland's freshly made cocktail to the ground. Fortunately no one was injured except Dick's pride and a mysterious, steaming hole burned through the concrete where the spilled cocktail left its mark!

After lunch everyone headed back to the marina for the Commander Fleet Race. Old Speed Demon Radford had organized a Commander race but the Captains all balked (chickened out-afraid they would lose) and opted for a boat parade instead. Five of the fleet ventured out onto the aquamarine waters for the parade carrying along the entire group of people attending the event. The Fleet maneuvers were recorded from overhead by member Gary Otto in his airplane. We should have had a race anyway as the Commanders leapt out to sea with throttles to the wall with Todd Heinrich in the lead. Following this there was an extended period of ships lost at sea trying to form a "V" formation. Finally, the Fleet got organized for some nice shots from overhead. This unprecedented gathering of Commanders cruising in formation was something to behold and was truly a scene from the 1960's. Chris Craft would have loved to have had a photo of this event back then for their sales catalogs! It was nostalgic and glorious.

Saturday evening found the sailors and their families back at the Resort enjoying cocktails and exhibits of Commander literature and a surprise exhibit of the original artwork by Dick Avery of the Commanders he had designed back in the 1960's. The later collection was exhibited by Scott Anderson. A chicken dinner was then served followed by the very full evening program. Gary Otto did a slide show with pictures of the event to date including the overhead shots of the Fleet Maneuvers which was very well received. This was followed by an interesting presentation by Scott Anderson on Fred Hudson and Dick Avery who designed the Commander line. The attendees were then asked to vote for their favorite Commander of the Fleet. A hotly contested vote count followed after J.W. Holcomb discovered a loose chad. After the turmoil settled and the recount was rebuffed, the winners were announced.

Ron and Pat Smoker's *SUMMER SONG* won first place as well as the trophy for the boat having come the longest distance to attend-some 600 miles each way. *SUMMER SONG* is a 1967 Commander Sedan that had been freshly awlgriped and renovated with a gorgeous new interior and had two Caterpillar diesels installed. Second place went to Todd and Susan Heinrich ;s *GROSSE ISLE*. This 1967 38 Commander Express was pristine and very original including her 2500 hour 427's that had never had their heads taken off and went like a bat out of hell.

Incidentally, this Commander was the next boat in line from the author's Commander, *CABIN FEVER*, on the assembly line at Chris Craft in 1967! Third place trophy went to George and Catherine McKay for their 1968 35 Commander Express *GOIN GOOD*. This boat featured the original interior wood work and a tremendous amount of room for a boat of its size. All of the boats in attendance were in excellent condition, a testament to the love lavished on them by their owners and the quality of the Chris Craft construction. All the Captains received special CCCC hats with our Founder, Todd Heinrich, receiving a special Grand Pooh Bah hat. In addition, all the members in attendance received interesting rendezvous plaques from Paul Pletcher made out of wood taken from antique and classic boats that had been restored.

Following the awards and presentations, a round table question and answer session was chaired by Dick Morland along with Todd Heinrich, Paul Pletcher, and Joe Attura. A one-hour question and answer session where Commander owners had the unique opportunity to pepper the experts with a variety of questions on their boats. No one wanted it to end as it was so interesting and so much fun. Funny thing is that Dick never charged anyone anything, but I do not recall any dumb looks either. The meeting ended at 10PM with everyone going to bed much wiser and with full stomachs.

Sunday morning, the rendezvous weekend concluded with a farewell breakfast buffet at Pins Bar and Grill. A few more boating war stories were shared, goodbyes were said, new friendships were solidified, and with that, most everyone departed for home. We can't wait till next year's rendezvous.



*Commanders on Parade - Drummond Lake Meet*

# continued... predictions

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the Drummond Island rendezvous, which can be used as a reference point for improvement of my own boat. I am back in Nashville armed with numerous things that now "must be done" on my Commander. For instance, Janet wants me to re-chrome the feet on the side rail stanchions because ours don't look as good as some of what she saw at Yacht Haven. "Thank\$", whoever you are; Smoker, I think it was you!

What really leaves an impression is the condition of the boats, as they are now. These rendezvous will undoubtedly enhance the quality of the Commanders to some higher level, but Commander people obviously already know the value and special nature of the boats. I attribute this fact as a reason for the great overall existing quality of the fleet. The club will undoubtedly drive the cost of the Commander upward, due to the fact that there is now a central knowledge base for these boats where there had previously been very little. This will obviously give any new buyer a LOT of information and confidence.

When I first searched the Internet for information on the Chris Craft Commander a few years ago, there was absolutely nothing listed other than an occasional boat for sale. When the first Classic Boating article was published by Curt Radford, I remember thinking "this is great", because I had seen very little published about the boat. Now look at what we have! Rather than having an obscure 35 year-old boat, the "old boat syndrome" is now replaced with the "club-supported collectors item syndrome", complete with a vast amount of files, articles, and a very active, informed, and experienced membership. It's a wonderful thing!

**Long live the Chris Craft Commander Club!**

*-Paul Pletcher*



*Still "Commanding" the waterways:*

*The Drummond Island Commander Meet*

# drummond island... pictures



Joe Attura presents...



Careful review of all those beautiful Commanders



Joe Attura having a "look around" the Smoker's "Summer Song"



"Grand Poobah", Todd Heinrich

# continued... buying

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Reminded of the Chris in the Portland Little Nickel, I protest that it can't be a very good boat, but I'll call. When I finally get a hold of the owner I ask where in Portland the boat is. "It's not in Portland," he says. "It's in Westport." My heart skips a beat, and I tell him I've seen the boat. My next day off is January 1<sup>st</sup>. Could he meet us there to show the boat? Arrangements are made, and for the next two days I find it hard to sleep from the excitement of seeing this boat.

## **January 1997:**

The New Year begins with a cold day filled with rain. Normally not a problem, but after the winter storms, snow is absorbing the rain and preventing it from running off, clogging drains on roads, flooding all over Washington State. We leave early in the day to make the two hour drive to Westport. We end up backtracking repeatedly because of flooded roads. Four hours later we approach the only remaining route, only to find a road closed sign. We pull into a Sheriff's station to enquire if there is *any* route to Westport. The trooper tells us that they have just received word that the route we are sitting at has just opened.

Five hours after leaving our home, we stand on the dock in front of the 1971 Chris Craft Commander 31' Sedan. But the owner isn't there. We wait an hour, but still no owner. The boat is locked with a pad lock. With the sky turning dark, I try one of the cabin windows. It slides aside, and I push my wife's 12 year old daughter through with instructions to open the forward hatch.

My wife isn't as adventurous, so I climb in the bow hatch alone, and examine the boat. The carpet is industrial grade carpet, and the curtains are stained. Otherwise the boat appears ok. I point out items to my wife through the window. Her daughter likes the salon settee that turns into bunk beds. The head is nice and large and the shower is a welcome feature.

We have dinner at a local restaurant and drive home. The radio reports that the most direct route is open again, and we make it home in three hours. Upon my arrival I call the owner in Portland. He apologizes that he couldn't make it, but the freeway between Portland and Seattle is flooded and closed.

"I'm sending you a purchase agreement and a check for \$100. We'll take the boat. Cash the check, sign the agreement and mail it back. We'll close just as soon as the insurance settlement closes on our old boat, within 30 to 45 days."

"You don't need to send a check," he says.

"No, I want to, and I want to get together and be sure both

engines run." Arrangements are made, and I mail off our agreement.

When we meet to run the engines, he tells me that two days after I called him, he'd gotten a call from someone who'd seen the boat a few months ago. Asked if he had sold the boat he had told the gentleman that he had an agreement on it. The gentleman asked if he had his money yet, if he didn't, the gentleman would pay more for the boat. I had a lot of respect for the seller when he said he had told the man that he had made an agreement, and he was a man of his word.

We also got the full story on the boat. The owner, a nice if somewhat simple gentleman, had purchased it a few years before to live aboard for his retirement. He had bought the boat in Portland, and taken it around to Westport. The trip had been down the Columbia River, across the bar, and North to Westport. Since the owner ran the boat at 1750 rpm (8 1/4 knots) it had been a long trip. And rough. He lived aboard the boat for a while, but never took it out. The trip North had scared him pretty badly. He had paid over \$35,000 for the boat when he bought it, and was now just trying to sell it for what he owed on it, since the boat payment was eating up all his pension check. While there was a minor engine problem at sea trial time (which he made worse by messing with the timing) he agreed to pay for a mechanic to travel to the boat to check out the problem. He handed me the keys at that point, even though we hadn't finalized payment, since he didn't want to drive 3 hours to the boat again.

Within two weeks, our insurance company settles on our lost Connie, and papers are signed on the Commander. We own a boat again. The only problem is that it's in Westport, on the Pacific Ocean, and we need it in Port Orchard on the Puget Sound.

## **February 1997:**

I sit down with a road map, and try to figure how far a run it will be up the Washington coast to Neah Bay, and from there to the boat's new home. I figure that it will be about a five hour run at cruise speed to the first place to get fuel, LaPush. This in the nastiest boating weather, and with a boat I have no idea how it will handle. While I am wondering about this, a larger sailboat is lost trying to enter the harbor. The Coast Guard rescues the crew, but the sailboat washes ashore and is destroyed.

Plan two. I call a local trucking company to get a quote on transport from Westport to Olympia, at the southern tip of Puget Sound. This will be the shortest distance to the Puget Sound. The truck company has a minimum charge of \$400.

# continued... buying

*continued from page 8*

“Wonderful!” I say. Better than braving the ocean in February.

The day comes to truck the boat, and I meet the truck in Westport. Fuel at the dock actually costs less than fuel on the road, so I have filled the tanks in the Chris before the truck’s arrival.

The trailer is backed into the water, and the boat floats on. When it is pulled out, I get my first look at the barnacle covered bottom. I pick growth off the trim tabs with a screwdriver while the driver secures the boat. “This boat’s less than 11’ wide, isn’t it?” he asks.

“No.” I answer “it’s just over.”

He looks at me. “You don’t understand. I can’t haul it without pilot cars if it’s over 11’. Now let’s try that again. This boat’s under 11’ wide, right?”

I smile at him. “I’m pretty sure it is.” I reply.

The mast is dropped and I tape it to the cabin top railing. We are running a little behind schedule, and I’m not looking forward to the four hour boat ride alone once we get in Olympia. “How much more” I ask, “to go to Tacoma with the boat?”

He figures in his head. I wait. “Same price,” he says. “Tacoma still, falls within the minimum mileage charge.”

“Let’s go to Tacoma” I announce. I’ve just cut my boat ride in half. And with the cold weather, and no heat in the boat, I’m happier already.

Halfway to Tacoma, and I’m following the truck, mesmerized by the transom of my new boat, when the right turn signal comes on, and I follow the truck and trailer to the side of the road. The driver gets out, hammers on his tires, and then asks if we can get off at this exit for a quick lunch. I have no problem, suddenly realizing that in my excitement I’ve forgotten about lunch, and we leave the rig on the roadside and go to a nearby SubWay in my Jimmy.

After lunch we have an uneventful trip to the Point Defiance Boat Launch in Tacoma. With my hand on a cleated line, I stand on the dock as the trailer submerges, and suddenly the Chris floats free, back in it’s element once again. I tie the lines, step aboard and turn the keys. The engines rumble to life. While they warm up, I write the driver a check, and watch him drive off. I untie the boat, and drop the engines into gear. As I clear the breakwater, I throttle up for the trip home.

At first the engines won’t turn above 2600 rpm with out cough-

ing and missing. So I cruise at that speed, still on a plane, and point the boat home. Eventually I can make 2900 rpm, and I settle in for the ride. The water is smooth, and I pass no other boats on my trip. If not for the chill, this would be a wonderful boat ride. I pick up my cellular phone, and let my wife know that I am on my way.

Two hours later I call her again, to let her know that I will be arriving at what’s left of our marina in minutes, and please come pick me up. The new boat is home.

## **Postscript:**

The 31 Sedan sits in someone else’s boathouse now. We replaced her with our second Commander, a 1972 (for sure) 35’ Sport Sedan, which we went all the way to Mandeville, Louisiana for. But that’s another long story.



Matt Gurnsey’s Crushed Connie



From Connie to Commander

# dahlen's tech tips

## Mechanic or Technician?

True or False: A Mechanic is a Technician? *FALSE*

True or False: A Technician is a Mechanic? *TRUE*

Now that I have your attention, the above statements are both correct. However, how many really know the difference between the two? Odds are, the percentage is lower than you would think, but then again, when it comes to getting the boat fixed in a hurry the above rule, while it should always apply, rarely ever does. Let's look at the differences.

A mechanic, will be glad to fix your boat, charge you a premium, (and in most cases charges in real time) and bases his diagnosis on something he has seen in the past on his cousin's brother's friend's ex wife's next of kin's boat sometime back in the dinosaur days. His library is limited to whatever free reference books a local parts house has provided him for his business. He generally has a flyer type ad on the yards local bulletin board advertising "Best prices in the area" Unfortunately, you will tend to find much heartache getting anything done on time and the repairs will be....well, lets just say less than adequate.

A Technician, however, has more ethical practices, as well as personality. First off, he will have credentials. Credentials like: College degree. Certificates showing successful completion of yearly schools for such big names as Mercruiser/Mercury, Volvo/Penta, Crusader, Yanmar, Onan, etc. As far as ethics are concerned, where the mechanic is also known as an overpaid Parts Changer, The Technician, is more apt to be ready to tell you **WHY** the part failed, What caused it, and How you can prevent it from happening again, and lastly, When you should expect to need help again in this particular area. So you could say, when selecting a technician, you watch for the **WHO, WHAT, WHERE, WHEN** and **WHY's**.

When selecting someone to do the repairs on your boat, here are some do's and don't's in the business **BEFORE** starting.

◆ **DO** ask to see his credentials for the job he is doing.(especially for air conditioner or electrical work) These update schools also provide technicians, with updates that could be freebies not related to the repair at hand to prevent a later problem.

◆ **DO** ask for a written estimate of repairs. A reputable technician will not be offended, however some will charge a fee for this, usually .5-1hr. of labor, **MAKE** sure to ask the technician if the fee can be applied toward the repairs should you hire him to do the work. Most techs will do this, but in their defense, they

must charge the fee to compensate for the time they could actually be doing a repair for someone else. A 10% either way deviance is allowable without a phone call. **BE PREPARED** **DO** ask if the technician is **INSURED**. A reputable technician/Dealership will have **NO LESS** than a 1 million-dollar liability policy. (You are allowed to ask for proof before he starts, and I would considering, one spark can sink a 100 boats on a dock and God forbid if you are docked on the Gas dock!) In closing I would have to ask you again....  
A Technician, or a Mechanic?? Which are you using??

◆ **DON'T** go for the first and fanciest ad in the yellow pages. (This generally will always lead to trouble)

◆ **DON'T** always go for the lowest bidder. There may be a reason for the deviation in price.

And lastly, make sure you read **ALL** of the fine print on the service contract. Remember without a signed contract **BEFORE** repairs are done, **YOU** are liable for anything that happens in the yard, because in a court of law, a signed contract is proof, but without one, it is your word against his. And EPA fines alone are enough to bankrupt any of us.

Some of the most popular questions asked on the CCCC site lately. Here are the correct answers!

1) Prop Size VS. RPM's. It doesn't matter what size the boat is, nor the weight. (These are used for the prop shops **BASE** reference to get you started. You will almost assuredly have to adjust as needed to get it right. A Gasoline V8 engine (Ford Chevy or Dodge Merc. Crusader, Chrysler etc.) is rated to run 42-4800 **RPMS** **WOT** with a Clean Bottom. ( I always suggest the middle at 4600) The speed doesn't matter as much as the **RPM's** to the engine. If you are propped to this spec, you will minimize premature failure and maximize fuel consumption. One other note, when testing, do so with Fuel and water tanks as close to half as possible. (This will keep you in the **RPM** window whether full or empty)

2) Electronic VS. Points distributor Ignition. Both systems do have their pro's and con's. The biggest thing to remember is that while electronic ignition has a hotter spark, it most usually **CANNOT** be serviced while at sea. The points can be replaced in an emergency with a Screwdriver, a matchbook, and a flashlight. The choice is yours but, if you go electronic, make sure your towing insurance is paid up!

**Next issue:** Batteries and their systems for extended cruising.

# commanders in the movies

## ALONG CAME A SPIDER.

by Curt Radford

This movie is a great thriller with the kidnapping of a Senator's daughter and a triple double cross that keeps you guessing till the end. It stars Morgan Freeman. Its biggest star, however, is a 1965-69 38' Commander Sedan FB that the kidnapper uses to keep the victim captive. The boat is used extensively in the movie and she is a beauty.

The boat was named, I believe, "*C DREAMER*." It was filmed in the Potomac area. Film credits list a Dan Crosby as the "Marine Consultant."

This Commander was gorgeous and completely redone inside and out. The hard top was extended nearly to the stern. This made for a commodious flying bridge. The bow had a pulpit with redone stainless railing pointing out in the shape of the pulpit. The sedan pilothouse was full of video screens and TV monitors the villain used to keep track of his kidnapping victim and the police. the complexity of the electronics on the bridge would make even Dick Morland jealous! The usual aft, stainless steel railing was replaced with a more classic mahogany railing. The boat's interior was all redone with mahogany and teak. The headliner had slats of varnished wood running from side to side to give the ceiling a more finished look. For those whose guests are less inclined to go boating willingly, the windows all had bars, and the forward stateroom was converted into a padded cell!



You have all got to go see this movie! You will all be calling Hollywood trying to get your Commanders lined up for the next new movie. They might even pay for the renovation! Seeing a 38' CC Commander in a new Hollywood movie proves that our old Commanders are either really moving up (or down depending on your view of Hollywood) in this world!

## it's all in a name

FORT LAUDERDALE - Not only is Chris-Craft no longer "an orphan within big conglomerates" it now, for the first time in modern history, actually owns its own name.

"We have done what nobody has been able to do in 30 years; not only did we acquire the shipyard but we acquired the Chris-Craft brand name," says Stephen Julius, the British investor who bought the company last March.

For all the years it owned the company, the now-bankrupt Outboard Marine Corp. had paid an annual licensing fee to Chris-Craft Industries for the use of the name. Chris-Craft Industries, based in New York City, had long since sold off the boat company and evolved primarily into an owner of TV stations. Chris-Craft Industries and its 10 TV stations were sold in August to News Corp. and its subsidiary, Fox Television Stations, presenting the Julius group an opportunity to restore the name to the nation's oldest boatbuilding company.

The reborn Chris-Craft announced the change and unveiled its new 2002 Heritage models at a launch party Thursday afternoon at the Fort Lauderdale International Boat Show. The new owners say they have a background, through their earlier ownership of Riva Boats in Italy, to ensure Chris-Craft a "return to its former glory."

- Melanie Winters (from a Chris\*Craft Press Release)

# commander club

\* *Founding Member*

## 23' Owners

68 Mike O'Brien

## 27' Owners

66 Robert Cook & John Hupf  
66 Lee, Boyne, Jodie & Norah Dahlen  
66 Ray Easler  
66 Steven Inman  
66 Ed Kenny  
66 Christopher Pazar  
66 Alan Seaman  
66 Norbert Tasler  
67 Dennis Brown & Joanne Brown  
67 Bud Morgan & Karen Burge  
67 Richard Plahetka  
68 Mark Kennedy  
68 Marv Phelps  
69 Kent Stanford

## 28' Owners

65 Lee Pratt & Karen Pratt  
73 Fred Gockel

## 30' Owners

74 Mike Razmek

## 31' Owners

66 Jack Couveur  
66 Paul Davis  
66 Harry Haskins  
66 Alarik VonHofsten  
67 Bill Botdorf  
67 Irving "Buzz" Brown  
67 Peter Espinosa  
67 Arvil Reeb  
67 Ian Ross  
67 David Schwartz  
68 Bob Bailod  
68 Josh Beatman  
68 Robert Cutchins\* & Jamie Rolison  
68 David DiSesa  
68 Jeff Laethem  
68 Steve Lenzion  
68 Joel Lorenz  
68 Fran Schoch  
68 Hans "Butch" Weinhold  
69 Scott Anderson  
69 Dave Ashley  
69 Michels George  
69 Dan Griepsma & Debbie Griepsma  
69 Amanda McClendon  
69 Mark Merritt  
69 Terry W. Sorensen  
69 Robert Tressler  
70 Earl Haase  
70 Jeff Moss & Karen Moss  
70 Gary Otto & Diane Otto  
71 Henry Overduin  
71 Dale Warren  
72 Ken Anderson  
73 Clyde Caron  
73 Geoff Geier  
74 Maurice Keefe & Mary Keefe

## 32' Owners

83 Anthony White

## 35' Owners

68 William Colvin  
68 Mike Crikis\*  
68 George Davidson  
68 George McKay  
68 Tim Miller & Elizabeth Miller  
68 Chris Orphal  
68 Bruce Snider  
68 Allen Zigterman  
69 John Columbo  
69 J. Kevin Harthlow  
69 John Carpenter  
70 Jason Burge & Cheryl Hatch  
70 Gord Gowland  
70 Johnny Jones  
71 Joe Bolis  
71 Todd Cantrell  
72 Matt Gurnsey  
85 Roland Aube

## 36' Owners

73 Barney Welch  
75 John Even

## 38' Owners

64 Ralph Hass  
64 David Pike & Charlene Pike  
65 Ted Boscoe & Adrienne Boscoe  
65 Jim Gibboney  
65 Mike Goodall  
65 Jim Hering  
65 Bud Johnson  
65 George Klein  
65 O.C. McCreery  
65 D.L. Schwartz  
65 Todd Smith  
65 Larry White  
65 Bill Zeller  
66 Steve Bartosik  
66 Wayne Ens  
66 Ken Fellenstein  
66 Clif Orphal & Linda Orphal  
66 Whitney Pillsbury & John Clarke  
66 Ben Plachta  
66 Paul Pletcher\* & Janet Pletcher  
66 Ed Rufrano & Delores Rufrano  
67 Todd Heinrich\* & Susan Heinrich  
67 Shawn Keulen  
67 Bruce Martin  
67 Frank McLaughlin  
67 Sanders McNew  
67 Matthew O'Donnell  
67 Curtis Radford\*  
67 Ron Smoker & Pat Smoker  
68 Jon Allen & Debbie Allen  
68 Andy Berthelson  
68 Herb Brock  
68 Bob Callan  
68 Dave Gerish  
68 J.W. Holcomb & Joanne Holcomb  
68 Debbie Kelly  
68 Kevin Osborn  
68 Bill Tuttle  
68 Dick Vandish  
68 Ron View, Jr.  
68 Wes Wesolowski  
69 Charles Edmonds  
69 Don McEwan & Susan McEwan  
69 Roger Munson  
69 Dick Morland\* & Patty Morland  
69 Ron Ward

69 Bob Wojnarowski  
69 Mark Young & Debbie Young  
70 Reed Hamel  
70 Larry Misenko  
71 Maury Pierce  
71 John Westscott

## 41' Owners

72 Robert Hope  
72 Steve Jaeger  
72 Ray Sales & Cin Staebell  
73 Walter Timmons  
76 Dave Cook & Amy Cook  
78 Dennis Naylon & Cathy Geier

## 42' Owners

67 Mike Adam & Lora Adam  
67 John Sullivan  
68 Bill Gribble  
68 Daniel Rice  
69 Robert McDonald  
70 Mark Odonnell & Sharon Phelps  
71 Marker Lovell

## 47' Owners

66 Lyle Hatch  
67 Jim Davidson  
67 Kenneth Radig  
67 Mark Ward & Maggie Ward  
68 Jack E. Boone, Jr.  
68 Robert Gardner  
68 Jim Zins  
69 Stephen Kelley  
69 Ron Ritter & Margaret Ritter  
70 John Rose Fran Rose  
70 Allen Willey  
72 David Lorimar  
73 David Jenkins

## Friends of the Commander Club

Joe Attura  
Bill Heinrich  
Scott Abbott  
Dick Avery  
Bob Brown  
Tami Dalgaard  
Saaco Dennis  
Rick Foley  
Ken Hardy  
Richard "Doug" Harris  
Larry Keown  
Tom King  
Jim Limbright  
Robert McBride  
Jim McCleod  
Lenny McDaniel  
Don McEwen  
John Morse  
Lawrence Neisler  
Dick Plock  
Bob Seldon  
Richard Sturreiter  
Pruitt Todd  
Tim Toth  
Steve Whitaker  
Wilson Wright



**First Place Winner** at the Drummond Island Event - The Smoker's "Summer Song"