

The sixth running of the race they created to commemorate Sam Griffith's name would have done the old reprobate's heart good had he been here to see it. On the first day, July 12th, New Yorker Bill Wishnick ran off and left the fleet in his red 31-foot Bertram *Boss O Nova* with twin 475-hp Mercruiser engines, establishing a new world record of 70.248 miles per hour.

But more than the sizzling velocity of the boats in the Sam Griffith, old Sam would have really got his jollies watching half a dozen lumbering houseboats fight it out the next day in the first running of the National Ocean Racing Championship for houseboats. He liked kookie things like that.

Especially, if he had seen this writer scurrying for his life on at least one occasion when the things one writer once labeled "floating cottages" roared down on my little 19' boat after making too sharp a turn around a stake boat.

Anyway, the two-day blast that sent boats of all kinds and sizes thumping over the surrounding seas and their crews and drivers into the poshiest hotels and restaurants proved to be a new twist on the old tortoise and hare fable. But the hares went one day while the tortoises had it out the next.

The U.S.'s flamboyant promoter, Capt. Sherman

"Red" Crise, who admittedly has concentrated most of his ocean racing efforts into making the Sam Griffith Race and a brand-new 100-mile national championship sea battle for houseboats his main project, wound up with one of the smallest offshore powerboat fleets in recent years . . . all because of his own hustling.

On the first day of activities, Saturday, July 12th, only 14 ocean racers showed up. Many others failing to make the scene for the world championship points affair because of the mauling they took in running another of Crise's events . . . the Bahamas 500, June 14th.

But the ones that did were big time. Notable missing again was Rome's world champion, Vincenzo Balestrieri, who was busy winning another world points race, the first annual Split, Yugoslavia, contest, July 11th. It now appears that the very fact that the Little Italian has chosen to pick up his points in the closer, less competitive European races may force him to come to America later in the year with his fellow countryman, Francesco Consentino, to fight it out with the Americans for the world crown.

Former world champion and defending U.S. titlist, Don Aronow was there with his 32-foot Cary *The Cigarette* . . . the twin of which he keeps readied in Europe. So were American greats Bill Wishnick and Peter Rittmaster

# Sam Griffith Memorial

STORY & PHOTOS  
BY JOHN CROUSE



... both in 31-foot Bertrams powered by twin 475-hp Mercuriser engines as is Aronow's boat.

When the hares had finished, Crise again had something to tell the world about ... a brand-new world speed record for the sport pending Union of International Motorboating approval. Wishnick's Red Bertram, ironically named for a boat-building company he owns in Miami (not Bertram), clinched her record for the 216.6-statute-mile course, leading all the way except for a brief spell near the one-third way mark when Aronow took the lead away from him only to succumb to mechanical troubles. The big Floridian and Wishnick, a New York resident, almost ended their careers about this time as they missed each other's boats by a few feet while negotiating a turn-off Palm Beach, Florida.

From then on it was Wishnick all the way. The only boat left in the race with any chance of catching the fleet Bertram was Peter Rittmaster's red, white and blue *American Moppie*, another Bertram. But the youthful president of Bertram Yacht Company, who has in the past two seasons been dogged by bad luck, had to run under reduced speed because of a cracked starboard fuel tank coming home six minutes behind the winner. It marked the second time that Wishnick has won the race ... he won it in 1965 in his very first attempt in the sport.

Third boat in, and first outboard, was Steve Sirois, younger brother to the great American driver, Bill Sirois, in a 28-foot Memco hull with four of the 140-hp Mercury

outboards on its transom. Sirois had to turn in a world record 62.18-mph to edge Jerry Langer's 32-foot Cary with four more of the big Mercurys aboard. He beat Langer by only 30 seconds despite running for almost 150 miles with a spark-plug wire off one of "Super BPs." It is interesting to note that Steve's brother set a world inboard record in the sport (since broken) of 62.7-mph in the 1968 Hennessy New York Race. Sirois' *Super BP* was the same hull that Dale Thayer won the outboard division of the recent Bahamas 500 with.

Ten of the original 14 starters were able to finish the race ... thanks mostly to near-perfect conditions of a smooth sea and bright sunny day.

The following day Crise again found himself hurting for entries for the unusual event he labeled the National Houseboat Championship, although there is another houseboat race staged in the states but not in the ocean. After much scraping and maneuvering Red managed to come up with six houseboats for the tortoise part of his offshore festivities.

The boat rumored to be the one to beat in pre-race talk was a 43-foot fiberglass Capri with a pair of 260-hp Chrysler engines for power. Aboard as crew was Sports Illustrated magazine writer Hugh Whall. The driver was Bob Storer.

Pre-race preparations were as much fun as watching the boats fight it out later in the 100-mile, 10-lap contest.

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Most drivers would be happy to consistently finish in the money, but Miamian Peter Rittmaster, shown here at the wheel of his 31-foot Bertram "American Moppie" powered by twin 475-hp Mercuriser engines, is getting a bit tired of coming home as a runner-up. Pete was second behind Bill Wishnick of New York, who drove another Mercuriser-powered Bertram. One consolation ... Rittmaster is president of Bertram Yacht Company, manufacturers of both boats.



## SAM GRIFFITH MEMORIAL

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With the exception of the Jacoby mother-daughter team of Rene (mother) and Gale (daughter) who drove a 42-foot Galleon houseboat with twin 225-hp Chryslers and Bob Cox in a 34-foot aluminum Marinette with a single 225-hp Chrysler, none of the other drivers had ever raced in an ocean contest before.

A fact that was obvious ashore before the race as drivers, owners and crew were seen going over such last-minute details as yanking out, then replacing such non-regulation racing gear as stoves, iceboxes, etc., which the rules stated must stay in the boats which had to be stocked all the way.

The winning houseboat, the *Capri XL*, averaged a respectable 31 miles per hour for the 100 miles. Second was a 31-foot Gibson houseboat driven by Dave Marlowe, who was 15 minutes behind the first-place boat.

Third was Cox in the metal Marinette followed by the Jacoby girls who made quite a sensation in Italy several years ago when they finished third in a borrowed boat in the Viareggio race. A 52-foot Stardust with two 325-hp Mercruisers was fifth with Dick Cross at the helm, and sixth went to a 24-foot Golden Viking with Leonard Lewis driving.

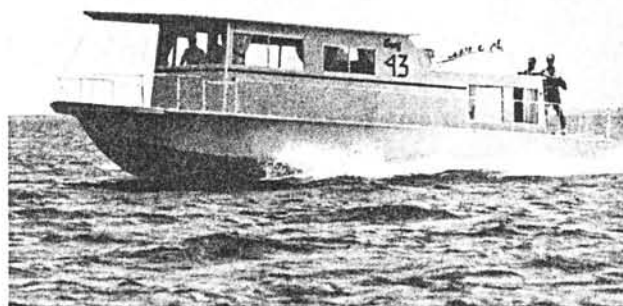
It was interesting to note that all six of the starting fleet of houseboats finished. Although it proved little so far as the seaworthiness of the craft... since the seas were minute in size and the wind was nil... it will be comforting for owners and prospective houseboat owners to note that they all performed well mechanically.

It was also interesting to observe that none of the really big producers of houseboats in America... Thunderbird Drift-R-Cruz, Chris Craft nor Nautaline had any entries in the race.

Getting back to the race of the hares: as of the Sam Griffith Race, the world points standing shows Balestrieri in the lead with 22, his teammate, Consentino, second with 21, Aronow third with 15, Rittmaster fourth with 10 and Wishnick fifth with 9. After the first five UIM events, including the Bahamas 500, England's Wills International, the Naples Trophy, the Split, Yugoslavia, and the Sam Griffith Memorial races. To this must be added the results of the Viareggio and the Hennessy New York Grand Prix which will have been run by the time this has been published.



Steve Sirois, younger brother of famed offshore ace Bill Sirois, makes it on his own in the sixth annual Sam Griffith Memorial Race. The youthful Floridian not only won the outboard division while finishing third overall but set a new world record for oceangoing outboards of 62.18 miles per hour. Sirois' boat, a 28-foot Memco, used four of the new 140-hp Mercury outboards to turn the trick.



This 43-foot fiberglass Capri houseboat was the first to finish the first annual national championship ocean race for houseboats held on a 10-mile course off Ft. Lauderdale, Florida. The big floating home averaged 31 miles per hour for 10 laps (100 miles) to beat out five other houseboats. Bob Storer was the winning driver. Power was a pair of 260-hp Chrysler outdrives.

### RESULTS — SAM GRIFFITH MEMORIAL RACE

BOAT	DRIVER	COUNTRY	MAKE	ENGINES	TIME
<i>Boss O Nova</i>	Bill Wishnick	U.S.A.	Bertram	2/475 hp Mercruisers	3:05
<i>American Moppie</i>	Peter Rittmaster	U.S.A.	Bertram	2/475 hp Mercruisers	3:11
<i>Super BP</i>	Steve Sirois	U.S.A.	Memco	4/140 hp Mercurys	3:29
<i>Dog Catcher</i>	Jerry Langer	U.S.A.	Cary	4/140 hp Mercurys	3:30.5
<i>Andrea</i>	Bob Magoon	U.S.A.	Magnum	3/140 hp Mercurys	3:31.1
<i>Snowshoe</i>	Wayne Vicker	U.S.A.	Memco	3/140 hp Mercurys	3:44
<i>Janie D</i>	Pat Duffy	U.S.A.	Magnum	3/140 hp Mercurys	3:47
<i>Fino</i>	Bobby Rautbord	U.S.A.	Bertram	2/550 hp Mercurys	4:07
<i>NA</i>	Dick Schultz	U.S.A.	Magnum	2/115 hp Evinrudes	NA
<i>Miss Linda</i>	Norm Latham	U.S.A.	Formula	1/325 hp Mercruiser	NA