

A SHORT HISTORY OF THE OUTBOARD MOTOR
THE DAY OLE THREW AWAY THE OARS # # #

Although they claim credit for the invention of the telephone and tractor, so far the Russians have said nothing about the outboard motor. They, like the rest of the world, are uncertain just how the whole thing got started.

Stories vary considerably and depending on how you want to look at it, the outboard may date back as far as 1864. At that time, a Frenchman named de Sanderel fashioned a steam powered multi-motor boat which was driven by no less than five propellers. Evidently, it wasn't too successful. Monsieur de Sanderel soon gave up the idea.

The next two decades saw several more attempts to build practical portable engines to propel boats. A host of Frenchmen, one or two Germans and a redoubtable Englishman all tried and failed.

The first real breakthrough came in 1892 when William Steinway of piano fame imported a gasoline outboard from Germany. It was the handiwork of Gottfried Daimler. Although it met with some success, fewer than 100 Daimler motors were produced and less than a dozen were known to have been used in this country.

In 1907, Cameron B. Waterman, a Detroit machinist, patented an outboard motor which enjoyed modest success. Two years later, Ole Evinrude, then a young pattern maker in Milwaukee, developed what has since come to be recognized as the world's first commercially successful outboard motor. How it came about is a story in itself.

According to an oft-told yarn, it all started at a picnic when a young lady named Bess Cary decided some cold ice cream would go well on that hot mid-summer day. Ole, being Bess's beau, agreed even though it meant rowing two miles to the nearest town. On the way back with the ice cream melting- Ole started thinking there must be a faster and easier way to propel a boat. A gasoline engine hitched to a propeller and stuck onto the end of a rowboat seemed to be the logical answer.

Building such a contraption was not as simple as it sounded. But in due time, Ole completed it and made ready for the moment of truth. He attached his "knuckle buster" to the transom of a rented rowboat and gave the flywheel a spin. It worked!

Convinced he could build a better engine, Ole immediately set out to do just that. His second motor started easier and ran smoother. In fact, it worked so well that Ole loaned it to a friend who came back the next day with orders for ten more just like it.

Ole's first ten "production" motors were entirely hand made, weighed 62 pounds and sold for \$62. each. They led to other orders and before long he had made and sold 25 of his "coffee grinders." This term was coined by Bess who had by that time become Mrs. Ole Evinrude. It was she who penned the now famous newspaper ad which encouraged boatmen to "Throw Away the Oars." They did and a new industry was born.

Unlike the engines that immediately preceded and followed it, Evinrude's original "Detachable Rowboat Motor" utilized the basic engineering concepts found in today's modern outboards-the horizontal cylinder, the vertical crankshaft and drivershaft with the power direction changing gears in a submerged lower unit. This factor unquestionably accounted for it's success.

Today there are better than six million outboards motors in use throughout the country. Boating has come a long way since that day in 1909 when Ole threw away the oars.