LAFAYETTE BOAT CLUB CELEBRATES HALF A CENTURY

The Daily Advertiser
Lafayette, La.
Monday, May 8, 2006
Page: 10
Columns: 1-4

ON THE WATER

Boat owners, club members still gather for social events

Judy Bastien
bastien@theadvertiser.com

It was 1956 when a group of young men in their 20s and early 30s got together to form the Lafayette Boat Club. The focus of the group was the high-adrenaline pastime of boat racing, with the more sedate component of cruises through various waterways with their wives and children to the Louisiana and Texas coast.

The group, which is part of the Greater Gulf Coast Boating Association, will hold its 50-year reunion this month to celebrate a half-century of fun and camaraderie on southern bayous, rivers and lakes.

After 50 years, the activities have toned down a bit, but the members, many of whom have been there since the beginning, are still having fun, said Marcelle Credeur, who became the club's first female member when the club's temporary secretary resigned and she took over the position. Credeur, whose husband was a founding member, worked as a secretary at SLACOM at the time. In 1988, Credeur became the first woman to hold the group's highest office and served three terms as commodore.

For Harold Terrell, racing was the incentive for joining.

THE PROS

Three Lafayette Boat Club members turned professional.
- Terry Smith, 1967 winner of the high-point trophy at the Hub City Regatta
- L.L. "Pepe" Allen
- Willy Romani, 1969 winner of the state championship to Class C Hydro and Class C Runabout and the 1967 winner of the southern division of the nationals for Class C runabouts

"A lot of people enjoyed it. They would sit on the banks and watch us run," said Terrell, a retired float plane pilot for local oilfield companies.

"In Lafayette, we'd race under the French Market bridge, at the Sugar Cane Festival, in New Iberia, at the Debarre Shrimp Festival, then we'd go to Alexandria. We'd go all over the country. It was good, clean fun," said the 76-year-old Terrell, who runs aircraft parts around the state for a local aviation company.

The races ranged from those sanctioned by the Lone Star Racing Association, the National Outboard Association and the American Power Boat Association, in which Terrell was clocked at speeds between 60 and 80 miles an hour in a hydroplane, as well as the

Children and runs from St. Mary's Children's Home were the guests of the Lafayette Boat Club at this outing in the late 1950s. The orphanage remained open until 1976.

Informal races on the bayous where the speeds were a turnover 50 to 60 miles per hour.

"That was when I thought I was good, but I wasn't as good as I thought I was," said Terrell, who capped up a number of trophies.

Public service activities were also part of the club's agenda back then.

"We used to pick up the orphans and take them on picnics and boat rides," Credeur said. The children were residents of St. Mary's Children's Home, which operated on St. Mary Boulevard until 1978.

Lafayette Boat Club members also took long cruises along the Intracoastal Waterway, sometimes ending up as far away as Port Arthur, Texas.

"The club activities have changed a bit since those early days. Membership has dwindled from about 50 to about 20," Credeur said. "Wen are now allowed to join without a husband. And the boat races became a thing of the past after the 1960s — especially on the Vermillion River and around Lafayette.

"There are a lot of no-wake zones," said Lt. Craig Summerville of the Lafayette Parish Sheriff's Department. "There are Sheriff's Department signs up saying, 'No wake zone.' " He added that speeding boats can send water onto the banks, which are occupied by homes and businesses.

The days of the long interstate cruises are also gone, Credeur said. Short boat trips on the bayous and cruises with their children and grandchildren are the club's central theme.

"It's still a tight-knit group," Credeur said. "We're not boating as much as we used to do. The club gets older and the membership gets older. Our lives change and we're just laid back."