



FROM TRIAL TO TRIUMPH

'GOOFY' SOHM'S REVOLUTIONARY JOURNEY IN THE PONTOON WORLD

BY SHELISA MELGAARD



Malcolm Sohm, better known as "Goofy" to his friends, lives in North Carolina with his saintly wife Terry of 32 years. He also has two daughters, Mary Kathryn and Courtney. Goofy practically grew up on the water with his father on their paddle wheel boat in Oshkosh, Wis., from the time he was eight years old until he was 14. Boating is something his family has always loved to do. Goofy's life was quite normal, like many other families, until he received terrible news. His youngest daughter, Courtney, was diagnosed with AIDS; needless to say, this news rocked the entire family and required many adjustments.

Goofy knew something needed to change. "When something like this happens you start to realize what is actually important in life—spending as much time as possible with those you love."

He wanted to spend time on the water because he knew this was one of Courtney's favorite activities. However, they quickly learned she couldn't handle the rough waters like she used to.

"I didn't need any better incentive than that," he said. That's when Goofy started looking for new ideas to make boating a smoother experience. Soon T.A.P. Fins were born.

Technically Advanced Performance (T.A.P.) Fins are made of aluminum and mount about a quarter-inch out from your pontoon logs. Most pontoons come equipped with a small fin seated in the front of the boat, but these fins rarely handle water conditions well enough to create smoothness through the water. Not only that, but Goofy likes to point out that his competitor's fins sit below the water line, rendering them ineffective and creating more drag, while T.A.P. Fins sit above the waterline, which leads to better performance, removing drag from the equation.



BEYOND HELPING COURTNEY

Once all was said and done, the T.A.P. Fins were attached so his daughter Courtney was able to go out onto the water again with her family before passing away in 1997 at the age of 21. Soon afterwards Goofy started to wonder how the Fins could benefit others besides just his family. Surely there were more people and families out there who dislike steering through rougher waters and could enjoy what the T.A.P. Fins offered.

That's when he called his good friend Greg Larsen—a sales associate here at *Pontoon & Deck Boat* magazine—and shared with him his intentions of going into business selling his T.A.P. Fins as attachments for any sort of pontoon.

"I wanted to offer people the chance to try out the Fins, to leave their worries behind and give them a test run to see

how they could improve their own boating experience," Goofy said.

After a lengthy discussion with Greg, Goofy remembers him saying, "You know, I think you're onto something with the T.A.P. fins."

With the support of his friends, Goofy went on to start Conrad Marine, his own business that manufactures T.A.P. Fins. When talking with Goofy, he always makes it a point that he didn't go into business for the money. "It was not all about the money," said Goofy. "It was about family time and giving that to others. Some folks don't understand what life is all about, and until they do, they're wrecked."

Conrad Marine's website more clearly explains the design and advantages of T.A.P. Fins. Another benefit of the T.A.P. Fins being above the water is they are easier to clean because they have no small cavities to worry

about after a day on the water. According to the inventor, fins under the water are more likely to grow bacteria and algae that also can create drag and be annoying to clean.

HOW THEY WORK

T.A.P. Fins can be fitted on all pontoons, even three log or U-shaped tubes. The design traps the water from the sides and flips it downward to create a more positive lift.

"Look at any pontoon boat on a brochure or their website and you'll see the picture is captured in motion and from the side," explained Goofy. "You'll also see a huge force of energy flying off the sides of the pontoon. What my Fins do is capture that energy, apply it downward, which in turn lifts the pontoon up and creates greater stability and tighter turn radius. It's the simplest invention; even a new



boater could see the difference!"

Goofy attached his Fins to his current pontoon, a Bentley Legacy 223 Navigator with a Mercury 150hp engine. This pontoon is about 23 feet long and can hold up to 15 people at a time. He purchased his Bentley from Long Island Marina in North Carolina. When asked why he chose to go with Bentley, he said, "It's known to be the lightest and fastest of the entry-level pontoons. So if I could take an entry-level pontoon boat and turn it into a Ferrari, then just imagine what I can do with the Rolls-Royces of the pontoon industry!"

He also appreciated the electric power steering on his Bentley. "I highly recommend this type of steering," said Goofy. "I have a crippled hand from a boating accident, so the electric power steering definitely comes in handy."

BIGGEST SUPPORTER

Over the past 30 plus years, Goofy's wife Terry has been faithfully by his side through all the ups and downs life has thrown at them and clearly is his biggest supporter.

"Malcolm's steadfastness and resilience on the T.A.P. Fin project has brought us closer together and inspired me," said Terry. "Seeing that he never gives up and continues to persevere is amazing! While obtaining a greater financial return would be great, we've learned that relationships and experiences in life are far more important than wealth; we have been blessed."

For well over 20 years, Goofy has put in the effort so others can enjoy the goodness of his T.A.P. Fins. He is an inspiration and an example of helping others because it's the right thing to do. Even though his invention hasn't brought

Malcolm "Goofy" Sohm (L) with friend Terry Kiser.

him a massive fortune, he considers himself a very rich man indeed with the friends and family he's met along this path.

"When I started this, I never thought I'd meet the nicest people that I have," concluded Goofy. "People such as Jim Doris, Ed Fisher, Doug Smoker and so many others are such gentlemen with integrity; I'm happy to call them my friends. This entire journey has been unreal." •

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Bentley

www.bentleypontoons.com

Conrad Marine

www.conradmarine.com

Long Island Marina & Dry Storage

www.longislandmarina.com