



Just About Outboards . .

I was thinking the other day about outboard motors and how much they have changed over the years, and it came to my mind that I have been boating for around fifty five years and for about forty five of those years I have owned or worked with outboard motors.

My current motor is a 115 h.p. Suzuki 4-stroke which is easily the best motor I have ever owned by miles and is as smooth and quiet as a Swiss watch.

I believe that the basis for the engine is the two litre engine used in the Suzuki Vitara four wheel drive road car. It is also much more fuel efficient as are most modern, computerised outboards whether two stroke or four stroke.

Some of the large current model 4-strokes produce better than a horse power per kilogram, which is unbelievable.

Speaking of the origin of some of the 4-stroke engines used in outboards, I was in the workshop at Sarina Marine, talking to the outboard mechanic, watching him dismantle a Yamaha 4-stroke which I think was around 115 hp. The engine was badly

Ebb & Flow

with Neil Dunstan

damaged by running it with a heap of salt water in the fuel which almost destroyed the fuel injection system, a problem for which the engine cannot be blamed. As he dismantled it down to the bare block I noticed that the block was stamped with "Ford".

I asked the mechanic why this was so and he said that it was basically a Ford engine but it was one of their special competition engines designed for the world rally car that Ford builds, as there is not enough horse power produced for the weight in the standard engine. I thought that there was something that I bet not many people would have realised.

He also pointed out to me that the two Evinrude E-Tech engines he had in the workshop were identical to the old 2-stroke engines produced by Evinrude before they went broke trying to make the FICHT injected engines work.

On checking under the cover on a 50hp engine and a 75hp unit they were, as far as I could tell, identical to the old two cylinder and three cylinder blocks which were first manufactured around thirty years ago. It seems that Bombardier who took over the wreck of Evinrude have been able to take a couple of old rattler's and turn them into some of the best and most sophisticated engines available by converting them to computer controlled fuel injection systems using their expertise gained building aeroplanes and jetskis.

As previously mentioned

I have been around for a long time, so much so that I can remember when all Mercury outboards were painted white and when the largest horsepower outboard available was 40hp.

In the early days there were motors such as the Anzani twin (which had to be the most unreliable motor ever foisted on the public) and our 40hp West Bend (the original Chrysler) was the fastest thing around.

There were no Japanese engines in those times, and I expect that if there were, no one would have bought them, as anything Japanese was considered to be rubbish, and the first of the Japanese cars that were appearing were truly awful.

Most outboards were made in USA and were the Evinrude, Johnson and Mercury brands along with a few British units such as the previously mentioned Anzani and the Seagull.

One engine which a friend of mine had many years ago was an Italian motor called the Carniti and was a real strange unit. It was about 9 hp, but it was a single cylinder diesel and weighed more than a 50hp 2-stroke of the time.

It's main claim to fame was that it had enough torque to push a 40' displacement hull at design speed. To start this monster (it didn't have electric start!) you had to clear the deck for three or four metres so that you could get a good run up. Then, with the five metre long starter cord over your shoulder you ran down the deck till it got a few revs up - then ran back, dropped the decompression lever, and away she went. Once

started, she was left running all day as the fuel consumption was so small that my mate reckoned he could travel "around the world for sixpence".

Another outboard in the same vein was the Yanmar diesel outboard which came out about ten years or so ago. This unit was a very sophisticated unit in 15hp and 27hp, and was available in long and ultra long shaft which was unusual at the time.

Not a lot of them were sold to the public that I know of, as they were extremely expensive but were very reliable and fuel efficient.

An American agent for Yanmar built a special alloy 35' ocean going hull and fitted three of these engines for a long distance trial to publicise them.

He succeeded in crossing the Pacific Ocean from the west coast of America to Honolulu without refuelling, then filled up and went on to Sydney, again without refuelling. This proved that the engines were not only very reliable but also fuel efficient.

I don't know if they are still around but I reckon they would be ideal for a nice 6.0m displacement cruiser in these days of huge fuel costs.

I guess you could go on forever about all the outboards that have come and gone, but I think that the one's that have survived are now pretty good and they will need to be if they are going to compete with the modern Japanese engines.

F&B