

finding fun and sport in skippering their own pleasure boats

BY THE HUNDREDS of thousands, landlubber families have taken to the nation's waters this Summer. Pleasure boating—already the country's No. 1 outdoor sport, with one of every seven families a pleasure-craft owner—continues to grow to armada-like proportions.

According to the Outboard Boating Club of America, spokesman for the pleasure-boating industry, 37 million amateur sailors spent more than two billion dollars on their hobby in 1958, including \$482 million for new boats, motors, and trailers.

Spare-time skippers piloted seven million pleasure boats powered by 404 million gallons of gasoline and protected by 10 million gallons of marine paint. And the happy boat industry foresees no letup in this mass embarkation to the lakes and rivers.

One reason for the boom is the happy combination of increasing leisure time and more available money for family pleasures. Boating qualifies as an ideal family-type recreation. It keeps everybody together in their free time, proves interesting to all ages, and is an exciting outing for a holiday or long week end.

Families also have learned that to skipper a boat they no longer have to live on a lake or even close to water. Modern pleasure craft are as mobile as a set of wheels and the family car can make them. Boat trailers, of which more than a million-and-a-half are now in use, have opened distant waters to families everywhere. For a week-end outing, any boating water within 200 or 300 miles is within easy trailering distance. And it's common for the vacationing family to pull a boat a thousand miles to new waters.

Another development which has influenced the boating trend is the improvement of outboard motors. They are quieter today than ever before, pack more horsepower per pound, and are more dependable.

There are even new waters for pleasure boating. The big impoundments constructed for power production, recreation, and flood control have provided hundreds of miles of new waters in such places as the Tennessee Valley, the Ozarks, and the Far West.

It's easy to own boating equipment today, whether you have the money in your jeans or not. Last year (when the average new boat sold for \$620) more than half of all new boats purchased were bought on time-payment plans.

Prices range from less than \$100 to whatever you want to pay. Outboard motors range from 1.7 horsepower to 78 and from prices of less than \$100 to more than \$1,000. The average pleasure boat bought last year, however, was a 14-foot family runabout powered by a 20-horsepower motor—a good combination, incidentally, for the skipper who wants his boat to double as fishing craft and family cruiser.

"For \$1,500," says one of the Midwest's largest marine dealers, "you can get a good

outfit that will put your family on the water. This will get you a 15-foot runabout, a 35-horsepower outboard motor, and a trailer. It may not be the fastest or fanciest boat on the water, but it is safe, seaworthy, and has a high resale value."

Boats should be matched to their motors and the load they will carry. Look at the boat for a tag which tells the OBC-approved maximum-load capacity and the maximum-size motor that should be used on it. Too much power on a boat is dangerous, while too little gives you sluggish cruising.

Every boating season brings forth a flock of fresh boating ideas, and seeing what's new is part of boating fun. Last February, with this in mind, some 310,000 persons filed through the massive Chicago Boat Show, the country's biggest.

One motor manufacturer displayed a houseboat different from any seen before. This one, made of colorful plastic panels, had a cabin on pontoon floats and was constructed so you could add rooms later. Ten other "floating cottages" were displayed; these offer slow speeds but the most relaxed boating you can find.

Nearby was the Coronet Explorer in which Ole Botved, a youthful Danish boat builder and member of the Explorers Club, managed the first North Atlantic crossing made by an outboard boat. This craft, powered by two 50-horsepower motors, withstood 10 days of pounding seas and helped prove the dependability of modern boats and motors.

From Pacific Palisades, Calif., movie- and TV-star Cliff Robertson brought in what may be the most versatile boat of all. He is marketing a rugged 14-foot, 75-pound, one-piece fiberglass boat called the "Missile," which can be equipped with a sail or with outriggers for riding the surf. She can serve fishermen on float trips, hunters out for ducks, or skin divers probing the depths. "And it's light enough for one man to lift on and off the top of his car," Robertson says.

Today's pleasure sailors enjoy more trouble-free boating than ever before. Better generators, introduced this year and combined with more efficient starter motors, give longer life to batteries. There are new safeguards against underwater obstructions.

For boat hulls, wood is still the favored material, although there is a trend toward plastic hulls. More manufacturers are bringing out larger hulls for increased comfort. Several of them are concentrating on models complete with bunks and enclosed cabins.

Some industry executives, when they find time to speculate, see a pleasure boater's future filled with wonders. One of them even predicts boats which will travel on water or through the air with a single motor.

Such predictions may not be as far-fetched as they sound. When it comes to rapid growth and new developments, no other activity can touch boating in its tidal wave of popularity among American families.

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