CADDO SKI BEES July 1958-1977

The idea of the Caddo Ski—Bees was born in late July 1958.

O David Stamps and Ron Rockett had met about a week before on Caddo

Lake. At the time, Dave had a 14 ft. yellow jacket boat and a 40 H. P. Mercury motor and Ron had a 14 ft. Duracraft with a 30 HOP. Johnson motor. Both were at the time of purchase, the largest motors available in outboard rigs. The going rate for a new outboard rig at the time being about two thousand dollars . 

considerable sum, when the average monthly income was about $400.

Both Dave and Ron had wanted inboard rigs, but this was out of the question financially. The H. P. available in an inboard was from 100 to 150 H.P. Definitely what was needed to pull multiple skiers and maintain acceptable speeds for what we wanted to do.

In 1953, Dick Pope Jr. had first skied without skis barefooted and had needed 35 mph minimum speed. He had done this for the newsreels shown in the local movie houses across America. For those vacationing in Florida at this period of time, Cypress Gardens and their water ski—show was a must to They also pulled multiple water ski acts such as ballet, O routine, clowns, jumping and ski kiters. All of which called for more horsepower. The small group of Ski—Bees tried to come up with something to enable us to organize a ski—club. The answer was an inboard boat.

Within two weeks of this first meeting, Ron and Dave had their boats up for sale and were negotiating for a used inboard boat.

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| We got a 17 ft. This rig would do 3 6 start on double skis. could alone.  The next project | Century with 140 H . P. Gray Marine engine. MPH and pull 5 skiers from a deep water We had accomplished together what neither  was a ski jump. The first jump on Caddo |

was 24 ft. long, 8 ft. wide and a stationary height of 6 ft. to j ump from. The j ump had no safety s ide boards. It did pretty well though, if you waxed and ironed it often enough with a hot iron.

About the beginning of the month of September 1958, the Caddo Ski Bees performed in their 1st ski show at the Caddo boat club on the north east side of Caddo Lake toward the dam from the Highway bridge .

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During this time, Pat Patrick was building the Cove on Caddo Lake. The new club arranged to put on ski shows during 1960 at the Cove on Caddo. Even with heavy rains that year, the area in front of the Cove was about 3 ft. deep. A very risky thing for jumping over a 6 ft. jump in the event of a fall. We could not make a deep water start in the Cove due to shallow water. A raft at the mouth of the Cove was the starting point.

The Caddo Ski—Bees put on several shows in the Ark—La—Tex area mostly on Caddo, both Louisiana and Texas sides in 1961 . In 1961 , they built the 1st portable jump, and purchased their first ski—kite.

About this time, the first Caddo—Ski—Bees Raft was built. We built it from the remains of a boat house that the club had acquired. We tied it to a cypress tree about two hundred yards from the hwy 71 bridge on the north side of the lake. Members would cross the bridge, honk and go back to Drift In Landing to be picked up by boat. This raft was rebuilt and enlarged several times. At it's largest, the raft was 40X60 feet, had three boat slips, pick—nick tables, ski bin and floated on sixty six 55 gallon oil drums and half of it was under a tin roof. It required constant maintenance and was rotting away with the club onboard.

David's hometown of Hawley, TX. had a red wood water tank that was to be torn down by the railroad. We arranged to have it torn down and the lumber shipped to Mooring sport, La. This became the 2nd Caddo Ski—Bee Raft. We used it at the same site until the headquarters was moved across the lake to Dave and Patti, s camp near Karnack, TX. One evening about dusk, we started across the lake with the raft. We had installed 2 outboard motors to it and had 4 boats, including the big and little Bombs, to tow and push it across the lake, through the government ditch, and Big Cypress Bayou to the camp, We arrived at our destination about 5 AM. This raft remained here till about 3 years ago, when it washed away by one of our recent floods. The remains of the raft are still at the Devil, s Elbow on the river.

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The old Puddle Jumper, the first inboard, was completely worn out by this time. David and Patty bought the new tow-boat, P. J. Jr. David, Patty, Ron and Jean went to Manastee, Michigan to the factory to pick it up. It was different from most boats that they produced in that it had a built—in tow bar for skiers in the mid section of the boat. Also, until this time, all inboards had a foot operated throttle. After arguing with the factory, who said it couldn't be done, they installed a hand operated throttle. This was our tow—boat till we were furnished the Bomb by Cross Lake Marina who by that time was our sponsor.

The club consisted at that time of a nucleus of the Stamps, Rocketts, Patricks, and a group of young unmarried adults that eventually became families too. Also, to the nucleus was added, the Lampkins, Boullions, Allens, Wisinands and some others. This was the group that saw the Ski—Bees grow from infancy, to a sports and entertainment factor in the Ark—La—Tex area.

Our first show that was presented to more than a few hundred people, was the Natchitoches, Louisiana Christmas Festival. The Club got big write—ups in the paper and were on their way to success. The Ski—Bees main—stay shows were the Holiday in Dixie show in Shreveport, LA in April and the Natchitoches Christmas

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show in December. The clubs peak year was in 1965 when the Ski— Bees according to one sports writer performed before more people than the LSU Tigers. We also did shows throughout Texas, Louisiana, Arkansas and as far away as New Mexico. The busiest,

O was a 4th of July weekend with shows in Lafayette, LA. in a rice field, Carthage, TX, Tyler TX and Gladewater, TX.

The club was maintained by about fifty people, that worked on equipment, developed the acts, sold shows and managed its affairs and skied.

At the height of the clubs existence, the club owned two boats, two stationary jumps, a portable jump, a portable dressing room trailer, two portable dock, a public address system, power plant, three ski—kites, about 20 pairs of skis and thousands of feet of ski ropes as well as a 1000 gasoline tank. Estimated about 50 thousand dollars. As you know, the skiers received no pay for their performances, but didn't we have a great time for a minimum expense.

Their were actually two boats named the "Bomb" The first was a 17 ft. boat built in Utah that had originally two 100 H. P. Mercury motors, The next year it had 110 H. P. Mercury motors. The second "Bomb" was and 18 ft. Well craft built in Florida. It was equipped with 115 H . P. Mercury motors the first year and 125 H. P. Mercury motors the next year. We had planned to put 140 H. P. Mercury motors on the "Bomb" when it was discovered the hull had turned to jelly. It was well used and worn out.

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WE went back to inboard power at this time. Also by this time, the original nucleus of the club had scattered over a wide area of the  and a new generation was doing most of the work. The old hands were still involved, but were too far away to participate as they once had.

The last show was performed on Ouachita River in 1977 and dedicated to the memory of David Stamps.

Information provided by Ron Rocket t, the Vice President of the Ski —Bees; August 1994,

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