

Traveling Incognito

Making a new outboard look old

TEXT & PHOTOS BY
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Owning a classic, 1960s skiboat, I take great pleasure in roaring down the river today, even as

I did when the boat was new. But boating for me, as surely for some others, does not take place solely on the water. It is my hobby. I like to read, talk and think about boats. Being somewhat of a craftsman, I also like to make changes in my craft, and to do it myself.

My boat is a 1961 model, but it sports a 1974 outboard. I have often thought that using an engine that matched the boat's era would enhance its unique appeal. I even contemplated finding and restoring an older motor, but the project seemed so big. Besides, I am really more interested in boats than motors. Also, an older motor would eliminate integral tilt and trim, generally force me into older mechanical technology, lower horsepower ratings and keep me looking for parts sources. I'd also be concerned about dependability. The whole idea seems like a wrong approach.

I admire the designs of the earliest OMC V-4s. These were engines trimmed

in varying colors. They used chrome and add-on panels. The motors had "true style" (like "true grit"). Today's V-4s are basically paint and stick-ons. They pale by comparison to cowlings that changed with each model year, vis-a-vis the 1960s automobile industry. My personal preference is the 1960 Evinrude 75-horsepower V-4. This engine is a true classic. Merging the style of this particular motor to my current equipment would be a great challenge.

However, I came up with a better idea—for me, anyway. This became the basic idea. If done correctly, I could create a masterpiece: The world's first

1960 Evinrude V-4 "poser"—it would be more aptly called a "sleeper." An outboard complete with gigantic, gold-and-black medallions acclaiming its mighty 75 horses would actually be a 115-hp machine traveling "incognito" (James Bond would love this stuff). That, I thought, would certainly have the potential to surprise a few boaters. I was already excited!

The first step was to locate and purchase a 1960 Evinrude cowling; a fairly easy task. I located a unit at one of the outboard parts salvagers I visit frequent-



Creating the world's first 1960 75-hp Evinrude V-4 "poser"—in reality a 115-hp engine traveling incognito—required creative thinking and careful modifications to fit the old cowl to a newer engine. The nostalgic look fits this 1960 skiboat perfectly, and makes it faster than it appears.

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ly. The cost was \$50. Mating the 1960 cowl to a 1974 pan would surely not be as easy. There was a little research and development to think through. The

simplest approach would be to obtain yet a third cowl that actually matched my engine. It would be cut and the bottom half contoured to the 1960 model using fiberglass and body putty (odd how complex projects can sound so simple). I located a suitable, partially destroyed

cowling at a second salvage yard. It was a bargain at \$15.

Now the real work began. The matching cowl was cut along a line three inches above its lower edge. The 1960 model (which is physically larger than current, higher-horsepower V-4s) was nested to the upper perimeter. The fit was far from exact, but contouring the two together was very doable. I filled in the spaces with cardboard to create a backing, and the cardboard filler was overlaid with fiberglass mat. After the resin hardened, the new shape was sanded. A second fiberglass layer was applied. The new contours began to take shape. I also filled and feathered the original portion's dings, dents and imperfections of the past 30 years. The general contour was smoothed with marine-grade body putty. The entire cowling was sanded to a slick finish in preparation for painting.

As I thought through the painting process, it became apparent that the situation called for a little creativity. The 1960 model's original colors were light gray, white, red and black. The scheme would actually clash somewhat with the boat's colors. So, the original scheme was modified, keeping the basic colors but changing their shades. Light gray became darker gray, white became off-white, red turned pinkish-red and flat black went gloss.

There is quite a bit of polished aluminum on the coating of the 1960 model, and years of weathering had oxidized the metal. This situation was improved by progressively sanding with finer and finer grit numbers, and eventually moving to power-drill buffing using progressively finer compounds.

Painting and polishing complete, the hood was fitted to the engine and instantly stole the show. It looked great!

On arriving at the launch ramp with my incognito engine, I immediately heard several comments of: "What is that?"

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