

Charles Strang Memory

My first memory of the Marine Stadium was when I was at Mercury Marine Motors. I was second in command of the place. We used to put on water ski shows using skiers from Cypress Gardens, The Tommy Bartlett Show, and others. We got a request to do show for the opening of the Miami Marine Stadium.

When I saw the Stadium for the first time it was very impressive-it was like something you had never seen before. The only thing close to it was at Navy Pier in Chicago, where they built temporary grandstands at the end of the Pier for water-based events.

I remember opening night. There was a huge crowd and an opera chorus sang selections from Die Fledermaus. It was spectacular.

I had numerous other memories of the Stadium. When I was still at Mercury, we had a factory racing team that did endurance races-six hours, nine hours, at the Stadium.

Then I moved to Outboard Marine Corporation (OMC), where we introduced the outboard motor version of the Wankel Rotary Engine at the Marine Stadium. We had a press event there, and it went very well.

At OMC, we came up with an idea for an interesting boat race-we made 17 identical race boats and equipped them with identical engines. Then we recruited the best racers from a number of different countries to race. It was an excellent event, and I think it was the first boat race shown on national television. The TV crews were down for the Orange Bowl. I believe that Bill Schumacher won the race.

During that period, we also had a lot of factory races-Mercury vs. OMC (Johnson and Evinrude), many of which were contested in the Stadium with great press coverage.

It was not unusual for celebrities to pop up at the races. I know we had one more of the Astronauts at the races, and this made good news.

At a certain point, a local group of racers began racing at the Marine Stadium once a month. We thought that was too often and that it would reduce the interest of the public. Eventually, the races ground to a halt.

I still remember opening night. I was there with Carl Kiekhaefer, the Founder of Kiekhaefer Motors, which became Mercury Marine. I remember going to a Miami restaurant with Carl and some guests shortly before the opening. Always seeking perfection, Carl suddenly jumped up in mid-meal saying "I have to go see how

show preparations are going"---leaving me with a big bill in a day when credit cards were not widely used!

It was such a great night. Such an enjoyable location and well done. It was really inspiring.