

New Energy for Vintage Mercury's By: Chris Bullen

In 1939, E. Carl Kiekhaefer purchased the defunct Thor engine manufacturing plant in Cedarburg, Wisconsin, not far from the Kiekhaefer family farm. Included in the plant assets were 300 Thor outboards that had been rejected by a large mail-order retailer, Montgomery-Ward, due to defects and operating problems. Kiekhaefer hoped to transform the Thor engines into capital needed for the future business (magnetic separators for the dairy industry). Instead of selling the engines for scrap, Kiekhaefer decided to make the most of them. He improved on the design and re-sold the motors with great success. Kiekhaefer designed motors that withstood the elements better than his competition. He introduced his newly designed Outboards as the "Mercury" brand.

I looked into this bit of history on Mercury when I visited a one-car garage shop in Richmond Hill, Ontario that specializes in vintage Mercury motors. The owner, Matt Lockett, represents the next generation of young Outboard restorers and bodes well for the future. I was referred to Matt Lockett for work on my Mercury Mark 30, by "Mr. Motor" Ron Stevenson.

I asked Matt to look over the motor as I had purchased it many years ago and I have never seen it run. Matt went through the motor checking that all was in good shape, then got the motor running, Fortunately it was sold to me in a good condition and no parts were needed.

Matt has been cottaging on Lake Simcoe with his family for many years. After restoring a car with his father, he needed another project for himself. Matt decided to restore an old Peterborough cedar-strip. He also restored the 1954 25 hp Johnson motor that came with it. This started a new interest, and he enjoyed learning about the motor and its internal workings. He then moved to a Lark and a Mercury Mark 58. This Mark 58 motor really caught his interest. Mercury motors have more parts and are a little more complicated, so he "dove in deep".

With help from the knowledgeable folks at the Maple Leaf Antique Outboard Club and his own research, Matt learned a lot and started to help others with this new-found information. Matt has now been restoring motors for five years and currently has fourteen motors on the go in his shop. Getting parts in the era of COVID-19 has proven to be slow, but he is moving forward as quickly as he can.

We are happy to see the excitement and energy in a younger generation. A person who has the passion for fixing these old motors is a great asset to the future of our hobby. Best of luck to *Matt's Restoration Garage*.



Matt Lockett with a late 1930's Thor.



Matt's Restoration Garage



Chris Bullen's Utility Race Boat with Matt restored Mercury Mark 30