

FALL  
**'25**

CHRIS-CRAFT  
COMMANDER CLUB

STYLED IN  
FIBERGLASS



CELEBRATING 25 YEARS

FALL 2025

# STYLED IN FTBERGLAS



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*On The Cover: Drone shot at 2025 Rendezvous, by Sam Lillard*



# From Your Executive Committee

## Chief Commander's Message:

Well, the end of the year is upon us. For our members who are in the south, smooth sailing ahead. You all get to enjoy some more boating. I spent many years in Pompano and experienced some of the most beautiful boating days in November and early December in Florida. Don't forget to get those Commanders lit up for the boat parades.

The rest of us are destined to 6 months of dreaming about floating again. It is a great time to knock out those projects that we did not get to during previous years. I know Suzanne and I have plans to spiff up both heads on My Other Honey. Boat storage days are great times to bond and meet other boaters and share stories and projects. I know it is a very enjoyable time for me.

The end of this year also signals the end of my time as Chief Commander. The last 6 years of my time on the EC have been very rewarding. Financially the Club is in good shape and I am confident in the incoming committee members and know they will continue to guide your club in the right direction. If you have ever thought about serving in an elected position, I strongly recommend it. This is a great organization and has so much to offer its members. I will definitely miss it, but 6 years of my influence is enough. Time to pass the torch so to speak.

I wish you all smooth sailing and a happy and prosperous 2026.

*S. Scott Shriber,  
Chief Commander  
2024 & 2025*

## Archivist Report:

Fun Facts as of September 2025:

[Comanderclub.com](http://Comanderclub.com) - the original and premier source for anything Commander!

**591** Chris Craft Commander Club burgees are proudly displayed around the globe.

**121** subscribers to the [CCCC Archives](http://CCCCArchives). Launched in 2022.

Includes 2 parts – **Superdisc**: a static product covering posts 2000 – 2018 and **Resource Collection**: include RC 6.0 and posts from 2019 and beyond. Resource Collection 10.1 – 131 new files added in January. 287 directories and 5362 files!

**22** Distributor Cap Modification Kit for 327F & 283F engines with Prestolite 4115 distributors sold

**7** boats sold in Classifieds -

**9** accessories sold in Classifieds – since the new site launched.

**80** boats are currently listed.

**25** – average number of new members per month

**Interesting places to visit on our site:**

## Resources Section:

**Vendors** - We have compiled an unparalleled list of links and contact details to a wide array of suppliers dealing specifically with Commander accessories, spare parts and service. It is a treasure trove for those of you hunting for those hard to find items. This section has 227 items. Check it out!

**Manuals & More** - Manufacturer literature the club has collected over

the years. Manuals, guides, diagrams, drawings etc. 327 items

**Files** - files with answers to frequently asked questions and links to articles about DIY projects, safety tips, tech tips from various websites. 96 items.

## Vault Section:

**Member Articles** - Everybody like good stories. Here is a collection of links to stories and articles that were previously posted at CommanderClub.com. If you are a “newbie,” this is a good starting point!

**Member Spotlight** features a club member who has contributed to SuperDisc or has advanced the goals & purpose of the club. Selection can be either by an EC member or suggestions from members. The feature debuted in 2012.

**Member Tributes** - Many members have made significant contributions to the Chris-Craft Commander line and to the club over the years. As we have lost some of these major players in the Commander world, club members pay tribute here.

**Photo Albums** - From various club events and activities over the years including rendezvous and annual calendar photos.

**Use the search feature** at the top to the right of the logo to find anything.

**The Help Section** learn to post photos, keep track of forum posts, set e-mail notifications, and add a classified.

**Have you visited the Dock Shop?** Here you can shop for Commander Club apparel, drinkware, and other cool stuff.

**Our YouTube Channel:** 98 videos that include upgrades and rehabs, mechanical & how-to, rendezvous, Chris-Craft history and much more.

# From the Treasury:

I am happy to report the club is still financially healthy. Our spending is well vetted and good. Our income streams are consistent and more or less we are staying level. Are we holding or making mass amounts of money? No, but that's not our purpose. We are doing rendezvous and other events that are paying for themselves for the most part.

We are taking in revenue and giving back to the members in a responsible and fun way! This is our purpose, our mission, and our focus. We don't charge dues for this club. Instead, we count on the members to buy subscriptions, and Dock Shop products to support our goals.

Our books are always open and transparent to view each month in a report that is published the minutes posted in the Club Business section on the website. Should you have any questions, feel free to contact me or Scott Shriber, our Chief directly and we will be happy to discuss!

*Lee Dahlen, Treasurer*

## Webmaster Report:

The club's online presence continues to thrive. A few months back, WIX (our website's platform) announced that their forum feature would be discontinued and that everyone would be migrating to their Groups feature.

The CCCC hosted our Discussion Forum and Classifieds on this Forum feature so this was a significant change for us. Around the June/July timeframe, we made the move, and so far, the Groups feature is working well.

An important note regarding these posts: you should receive emails when new posts are added by other members. If you want to reply to

a post, please go into the [CCCC Discussion Forum](#) or [Classifieds](#) and reply there. If you reply to the notification email, it only goes to a club email and not to the actual post.

Our [Dock Shop](#) is ready for holiday shopping. From apparel, glasses, tote bags, dog bowls, to the 2026 calendars, we have a wide variety of options for Commander enthusiasts.

Plan ahead as it can take a couple weeks to receive some items. In addition, we are designing and building new features, for the website, so stay tuned for exciting new tools!

*Pam Sorensen, Webmaster*

## Membership Committee:

*From the Helm of the first mate*

It's that time of year to put our Captain's baby to sleep. While boating is fun during the summer, it is after months of work and love that goes into it. Sometimes, as first mates, it is giving up our loves, (the captain), to tireless hours of hard work tucking their baby in for its long winter nap. The same process then begins again in the Spring when they awaken their love and bring it back to life.

For us, the highlight of this summer's boating season was the Rendezvous. While we could not bring our boat, due to distance, we could partake in the amazing venue and activities. From the morning gatherings for coffee and donuts (amazing donuts!), to the evening cocktails by the water, the Awards Ceremony and dinner, a lot of camaraderie was had. The amazing number of boats that made the journey, to their breathtaking beauty. The boat's shine and the owner's pride showed during the Rendezvous.

Thank you to the members who came out and supported the Club and to those who allowed us to board their boats and enjoy their highlights and beauty. We look forward to the next

Rendezvous, making new friends and enjoying more laughter and stories. If interested, we are always looking for more members and would be happy to talk one-on-one about our Club. As members don't forget to use your "You have been spotted card."

Thank you all for your dedication to the Club. For now, keep the shiny side up and we will see you in the Spring.

*Respectfully,  
Sue Bell, First Mate.*

## Public Relations:

This season has been a memorable one, both personally and for the club. After a long stretch of perseverance (and more than a few learning moments), I finally have my 36' Tournament Fisherman running the way she deserves. She came together just under the wire this year, but that only makes me more excited for what next season will bring.

On the PR front, it was a privilege to support the National Rendezvous. I created the commemorative poster, coordinated our press releases, and worked closely with the team to continue expanding the Dock Shop with new items for members.

Our social media presence has also been growing steadily—especially our recent experiment with AI-generated video content. Those posts have earned more engagement than anything we've shared before, a sign of how new tools can help us reach both longtime members and an entirely new audience.

I'm equally excited about additional ways artificial intelligence can support the club in the future. I've included an article in this issue that explores some possibilities.

Finally, I remain proud to serve as editor of **Styled in Fiberglass**, now 24 years strong. Enjoy this issue!

*Whitney Pillsbury, PR Chairperson.*



# 11th Annual Photo Contest:

The Chris-Craft Commander Club's Annual photo contest, once again drew a wide variety of entries from several countries. The pride of ownership was obvious and we're so thankful you took the time to share these wonderful photos. Here are this year's winners.



**First Place:** Olle Magnusson, Sweden, 1970 31' Commander



**Second Place:** John Duley, California, US, 1976 30' Sportsman



**Third Place:** Jeremy Goldstein, Ohio, US, 1970 55' Commander (owned By Todd Zacharias)

To see previous contest winners, check out the [Past Photo Contest Winners](#)

## 25th Anniversary Aug. 8-10, 2025 Chris-Craft COMMANDER CLUB Huron, Ohio National Rendezvous Rendezvous Recap:

What a great weekend we had. From the exciting arrivals to the fond farewells on Sunday we had lots of fun. Huron Boat Basin Marina Staff and Huron Yacht Club outdid themselves! WOW! We can't thank them enough!

We all enjoyed showing off our boats and sharing lots of stories. Big shout out to all of you who attended. Lots of fun was had by all and many new friends were made once again.

### By the numbers:

**58** registrations  
**143** attendees  
**41** boats  
**25** models  
**29** Commanders  
**6** Lancers  
**2** XK 19  
**2** Constellations,  
**1** Cavalier  
**1** Roamer

**Photo Links:** Thanks to Sam and Monica Lillard, Pam Sorensen and Todd Zacharias for the photos:

- [2025 National Rendezvous Photo Album with captions](#)
- [Rendezvous Information & Photo Gallery](#)
- [Photos 1](#)
- [Photos 2](#)
- 

# Rendezvous Awards:

These awards were presented by the local host committee as part of the 2025 25th Anniversary at Huron Boat Basin Huron, OH

### Flagship Award:

**Adam & Amanda Csongedi**

GOOD KARMA '74-47' Commander



### Appreciation Award:

**Chuck Siford**

In recognition for your support and dedication to the members and mission of the Chris-Craft Commander Club by providing artwork for the 25th Anniversary Rendezvous.





**Appreciation Award:  
Archie's Pizza**

In recognition and appreciation for your support and dedication to the members and mission of the Chris-Craft Commander Club by providing the pizza truck for the Rendezvous.



**Award of Distinction:  
Bryan Edwards**

**Huron Boat Basin Marina**  
In recognition and appreciation of your support of our Rendezvous.



**Bristol Fashion Award:  
Leslie and Jeff Grashel**

**CHRIS MY CRAFT**  
'67-42' DC Commander



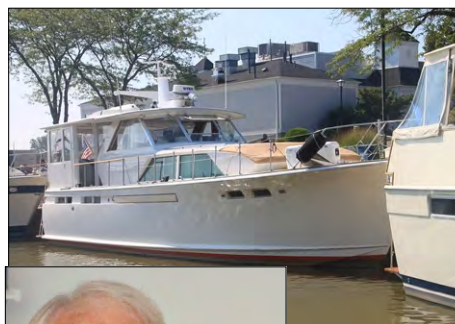
**Cleanest Engine Room:  
Jeremy Goldstein**

**XKALIBUR**



**Nice Touch Award:  
Dennis Bosak**

**IRISH LADY**  
'73-47' Commander



**Varnish Valor:  
Scott Waite**

**WAITE N SEA**  
'65-36' CONSTELLATION



**Best Helm:  
Bryan Huntley**

**WATER WORLD**



**Best Bar:  
Tim Toth**

**DUNROIN '68-35'**



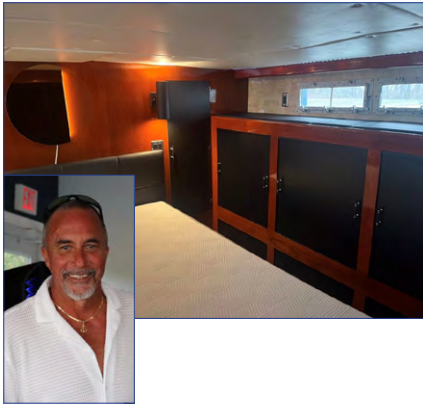
**Most Squared Away:  
Matthew Dobransky**

**THE LEGEND '72-42'**

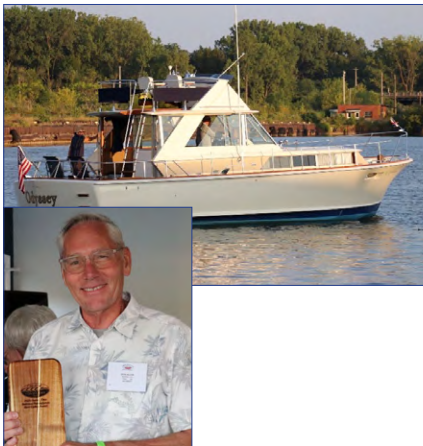




**Master Cabin Award:**  
**Todd Zacharias**  
 GRAND ILLUSION '70-55'



**Best Galley:**  
**Don Allen**  
 ODYSSEY '68-38' COMMANDER



**Tap Award:**  
**Jeff Grashel**



**Best Food on Board:**  
**Archie's Pizza**



**Oldest Chris Craft Award:**  
 John Tyger  
 CASABLANCA  
 '41-44 Chris-Craft DCFB



**Under Pressure Award:**  
**Tim Toth.**



**Longest Cruise Award:**

**Joe Lipare, OLD SPICE '72-41'**



**Robert Michels, TURN THE PAGE, '69-35' Sport Sedan**



**William Michels,**  
 DRYDOC, '70-42'



**Dennis Bosak,**  
 IRISH LADY, '73-47'



**Todd Zacharias,**  
 GRAND ILLUSION, '70-55'



**Longest Land Cruise:**  
**Alan Ball - MA**





**George Morrissey - IL**



**Terry & Faith Sorensen - IL**



**Mike & Mary Sutton - NY**



**Scott Horslin - Collingwood,  
Ontario Canada**



**William Kavanaugh - VA**

**Hosts - TJ Worsencroft, Tim Toth**



**Host - Sam Lillard**



## **EC Special Award:**

**Charlene Pike**  
generous service & dedication



[LINK: We also thanked all who contributed to our successful event.](#)

## **Sponsors:**

**ADC Warehouse**  
*Adam Csongedi*

**Custom Marine Inc**  
*Jeremy Goldstein*

**Peerless Ovens**  
*Bryan and Julie Huntley*

**Windward Talent Group**  
*Matt Dobransky*

**Navigate Risk Advisors**  
*TJ Worsencroft*

**Watkins Marine Repair & Restoration**  
*Jim Watkins*

**Lakeland Auto & Marine**  
*Chris Hamann*



# 25th Anniversary Greetings from Founder Rob Cutchins:



**Served The Club:** Founding Member & Webmaster: 1999 – 2005; Editor/Public Relations Chair: 2006-2011; Hall of Fame Award 2012

**Editor Note:** A portion of this was read at the rendezvous dinner on August 9, 2025.

Good evening to everyone. Congratulations to the organization on reaching this momentous milestone in its journey in bringing like-minded lovers of the Commander line together. Looking back to 1999, the idea was actually rather simple. I, along with Dick Morland, Curt Radford and Todd Heinrich simply wanted to take Todd's idea of gathering the information on as many current owners of the Commander model as we could. The internet was still relatively new (many users were still on dial up at the time). I decided to try using the internet to see if we could reach out into what felt like outer space and start drawing folks in and documenting their ownership information.

Well... you see where that landed us. We ended up with a busy user forum, a formal website, a newsletter, archived "how to's" conveniently organized on a CD, wearable apparel, and much, much more. It just quietly exploded. Along the way, a club was born. Before long, we were reaching members from coast to coast and beyond. We had gone international. We had well-executed annual gatherings all over the country, allowing members to meet in person and gawk at some of the finest-maintained Commanders to be seen. Tonight is one of those memorable and special events.

Never in my wildest imagination could I fathom where this group was actually headed back in 1999. But, I'll tell you this - I couldn't be more personally proud of the club, and all that it has accomplished in these 25 years. The individuals who have stepped up to serve the organization, past and present, and with whom I had the honor to work with, are some of the finest people I've come to know, many of whom I still call "friend." Char, Alarik, Chris, Curt, Whitney, and so many more. They've all volunteered their time and talents, and worked tirelessly to advance and improve the organization. I admire each of them, and feel blessed to have been able to work alongside them.

Enjoy your evening. Enjoy rekindling the old friendships you've made in years past, and igniting the new friendships you're making this very weekend. That's what has been at the heart of this organization from the beginning - the friendships and the desire to share information - and it's what keeps it alive 25 years later. Congratulations to the club, and to the continued legacy of the Chris Craft Commander.

Jamie and I wish each of you a very special weekend, and all the very best.

*Thank you.  
Rob Cutchins*

## From our Founders:

*As part of our Anniversary, the Commander Club invited the living founders to be our guests. Although none could attend we sent each of them a commemorative poster and print in appreciation of their visionary leadership and the legacy they began.*

*Here are the replies:*

### Todd Heinrich

**Served:** Founding Member Treasurer/President: 1999 – 2005



*"We got the cool poster and handsome Commander helm art by Chuck Siford. It is framed and on my office wall."*

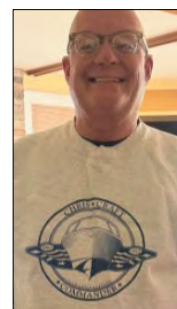
*Thank you and so many others who have grown and nurtured the club for 25 years. Long Live the Commander Club!"*

### Curt Radford

**Served:** Founding Member, 1999 - 2005

*"Nice to hear from you! It's been a long time. I've not had a boat since 2006. Thank you very much for the lovely CCCC poster - gorgeous! and The Helm print!"*

*Very much appreciated. I really drooled over the pictures on that poster. I used to dream about buying a 60' Commander but after seeing one I realized it was way too big! Now my boat is a Ferris 40 HP lawn mower with a 72" deck. I'm going out now to cruise the pastures!*



*Here is a picture of me in a vintage 25 year old CCCC sweatshirt designed by Paul Pletcher. I still love it. It's amazing what you all have done with the CCCC over the years."*

# Remembering Fred Delavan



**Charles Frederic Delavan**  
FEB 2, 1946 – OCT 9, 2025

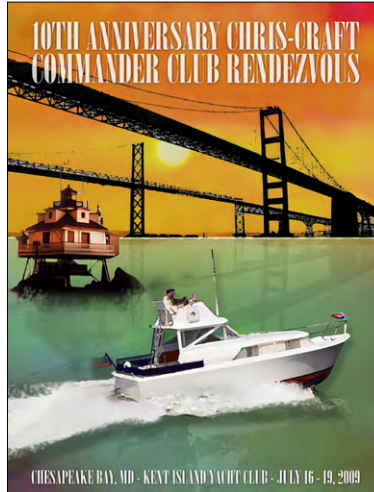
Commander Club members are mourning the passing of longtime member Fred Delavan. People like Fred are a reason our passion for Chris-Craft Commanders thrives today. It saddens all of us at the Chris-Craft Commander Club to learn of his passing.

Fred was a member of the Chris-Craft Commander Club since 2001. He and his wife, Eileen Powers, enjoyed boating on Chesapeake Bay aboard NORTHERN STAR, a '69-38' Chris-Craft Commander. They attended many national rendezvous and hosted one in 2009 on Kent Island, MD.



Above: Fred & Eileen's beautiful 38' NORTHERN STAR, 2009

We were part of their quest to find a Commander - offering suggestions, advice and tips. Before finding their Commander, they attended the 2002 rendezvous in Portsmouth, VA.



Above: Kent Island Rendezvous hosted by Fred & Eileen

Fred shared their experience in this Club forum post:

*"What a great time! Friendships were fostered. It was like a blind date. No one looked the way I imagined they would look. It took a while for the revised images to catch up with the boats and messages received over the past year."*

*The lasting impression of the weekend for us was not about boats. It was about diversity. As I sat crowded in Ray's living room with people I didn't know yesterday, I thought about how different we are from each other. We live in different states, we are of vastly different ages and life stages, we are singles, families, and various types of couples, our occupations fall across the board.*

*Under ordinary circumstances, we would never find ourselves together. Yet here we were, laughing, talking, and comfortably enjoying one another. Bound by a common interest that is bigger than our many differences. Dick Avery, did you ever expect your drawings to come to this?*

*It's more than about preserving*

*classic boats. It's that through these beautiful classic boats and the wonders of the internet, we can see beyond those factors that ordinarily keep us separated and discover that, all in all, we are more alike than we are different. And this is how the world will change.*

*So our enthusiasm for finding a Commander, which waned after many disappointments this spring and summer, is renewed. We are again accepting all comments and leads. We are still debating about size, an issue that hopefully will get a boost from a visit to Whitney and John's 38' in New York City next month. By next boating season we hope to be back on the water, grumbling about mishaps and repairs with the rest of you."*



Above: Fred, Whitney Pillsbury & Eileen 2005 Rendezvous.

Together we will remember Fred's contributions and the legacy to our passion and love of all things Chris-Craft. We will cherish the memories. Our lives are richer having known Fred. He is enjoying some much calmer seas in the great beyond. We wish him well.

Fred, we bid you, "Hail and Farewell!" shipmate, until we drop anchor beside you at the Last Great Rendezvous.

[More Information and Tribute Wall](#)



# Jerry Lewis & 60' Commander Lore:

There is a story circulating about Jerry Lewis buying a 60' after riding onboard Jackie Gleason's boat. He took delivery somewhere in Florida. According to the story, Jerry cruised the boat out towards the Bahamas and set the auto pilot to do wide circles, while he and his secretary went below for a "team building exercise." The circles drifted and the boat ran aground, tearing up the understructure. Jerry radioed for assistance and he and secretary were transported back to Florida. There, Jerry contacted the selling dealer, or someone, insisting that they refloat the boat and repair it. Supposedly, the damages were too extensive and the boat was abandoned.

We did some research. Here is what we found.

*"This is comedian Jerry Lewis' \$250,000 cabin cruiser, PUSSYCAT, which sprang a leak and sank off the coast 60 miles south of Monterey, Calif., July 19, 1966. Lewis, his secretary Carol Sarabino, and three men escaped the 65-foot boat without injury, although a big wave overturned a rubber life raft in which they were trying to reach shore. They reached land in their life jackets."*



(AP Photo/Dick Strobrel)

[Sources](#) & [Sources](#)

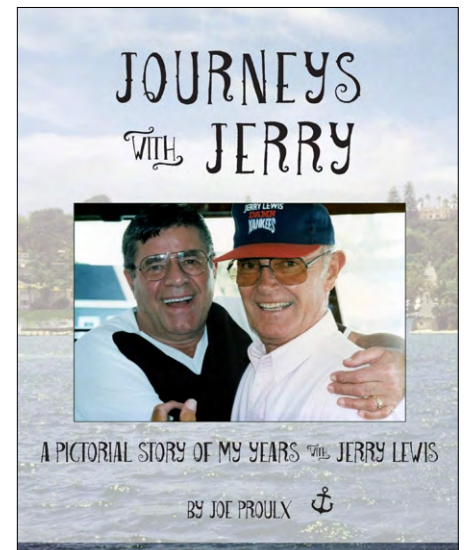
He also had a 60' foot yacht

PRINCESS TWO but it cannot be confirmed that it was a Commander.

Here are some photos from the '70's



[There is a book that chronicles a life working for Jerry Lewis](#)



Joe Proulx, from San Diego, became the captain and caretaker of Lewis' yachts. The first two, at 41' and 65' feet, were both named the PUSSYCAT, and Proulx had been working on the smaller for a while at the marina when one day, Lewis approached him with a job offer to work full-time exclusively for him. Proulx didn't hesitate to accept. The article mentions the sinking of PUSSYCAT but no mention of the 60' footer.

**Chris-Craft CORPORATION** INTER-OFFICE MEMORANDUM

Subject: LEWIS V. CHRIS-CRAFT CORPORATION, et al. Date: December 26, 1967

From: Will. S. Muir

To: H. H. Coll Copies To:

Jerry Lewis is suing us for \$222,000 for the loss of the vessel, \$40,000 personal property, together with \$1,000,000 for personal injuries of Lewis. Our attorney points out that the Sixth Cause of Action asks for a different measure of damages of \$192,095.20, which he presumes is supposed to be the value of the vessel as sold.

Our present general liability policy is as follows:

	Each Person	Each Accident	Aggregate Products
Bodily Injury	\$500,000	\$ 1,000,000	\$ 1,000,000
Property Damage		250,000	250,000

In addition to the above, we have a \$5,000,000 umbrella policy which gives us this additional coverage over the basic policy.

Assuming maximum financial exposure, the entire amount would be paid by the insurance company, however, \$50,000 liability and \$50,000 property damage could be charged against our experience under our retrospective plan and would be a factor in computing our annual rate for subsequent years.

As requested in your memo of December 18 we are enclosing the following:

- (2) sets of pictures taken at the time of Jerry Lewis's visit.
- (2) sets of BS0 final invoice.
- (2) sets of letters dated October 17 and October 19 along with 18 extra copies.



Jerry Lewis and family  
aboard THE PUSSYCAT

## The 60's Where are they all now? (an update)

By Char Pike

[The Spring 2025 issue of STYLED IN FIBERGLASS](#) included an article documenting the whereabouts of the 60' Commanders. There were a few that we could not account for. One of them is the second 60' Commander Motor Yacht based on hull number.

Here is what was reported in that article:

*"FMA 60-0002F: shipped to Jefferson Beach Marina, 244000 Jefferson Ave, St. Clair Shores, MI August 22, 1969. We have heard stories that Al Wagner, owner of*

*Jefferson Beach Marina, may have been the second owner. It may have been docked at Grosse Pointe Yacht Club at one time. Al Wager passed away in 2021. We have contacted Jefferson Beach Marina, Grosse Pointe Yacht Club and some other local Chris-Craft history buffs but have not received any information to date."*

Fast forward to August 2025 when Gerald Wagner posted this comment on the Commander Club Facebook page:

*"My Family owned the largest Commander ever built 60'. It caught fire and burned in New York."*

I contacted him to acquire more information. He replied:

*"Yes, my father was Alvin Wagner*

*owner of Jefferson Beach Marina and Brownies restaurant. My dad lived aboard in St Clair Shores and wintered in Miami Beach and later Pier 66 in Ft Lauderdale. The boat was named after the restaurant "Brownies." We were Chris-Craft dealers. The boat didn't sell so my Dad used it. The boat was heavy and slow not competitive with other yachts Hatteras or Bertram back at that time. THE BROWNIES burned on the way north from Florida in New York. Electrical fire. Sorry, I have no photos. Yes, our captain took boat back and forth to Florida. Not clear on fire date might have been early 70s."*

Conclusion: We could not find any reports regarding the fire or information on what happened after and assume the boat remains were scrapped.



# Artificial Intelligence

## The New Tool in the Toolbox.

By Whitney Pillsbury

If you are reading this, there is a good chance you love Commanders for the same reasons I do. Chris-Craft Commanders are more than a boat, they were built in an era when quality mattered and things were made to last. And we take pride in knowing how things work, in turning our own wrenches, in solving our own problems.

Which is why something like **Artificial Intelligence** can set off engine room alarms. It feels like the opposite of what we do: it's fast, it's new, it's abstract, and worst of all, it doesn't require bloody knuckles. I understand that reaction. But I also recently found myself deep into diagnosing a persistent problem with one of my original Marine Power 454s.

The port engine on my 1973 36' Tournament Fisherman had been rebuilt and was purring like a kitten. The starboard engine, less so. It would run nicely up to about 3000–3200RPM and then falter. I did what we all do: compression check, fuel filters, ignition check, and the time-honored step of standing in the engine compartment hoping enlightenment would strike. It didn't.

What did strike, eventually, was curiosity. And I opened ChatGPT. Now, I want to be very clear: A.I. did not “fix” the engine. I still turned the wrenches. I still traced hoses, checked temperatures and ran sea trials. What A.I. did was something subtler and more useful: it helped me think more clearly. It walked me back through things I already knew but wasn't holding in the front of my mind. It helped me reason out what compression numbers (taken on a cold engine) do and do not tell you.

And during sea trials, it became one

of the most surprisingly helpful tools. Instead of juggling a pen, paper, the helm, and the wakes of NYC ferries, I simply said the numbers out loud: “3000 RPM, 15 knots.” “3500 RPM, 17.6 knots.” “3600 RPM, 18 knots.” The A.I. logged them, organized them, averaged them, and afterwards helped me understand performance in ways that I normally wouldn't have the patience to piece together. It didn't replace seamanship — it supported it.

Here is an example of my chat with A.I. during a sea trial, engine hatches open, alone, with one failing engine:

*“Me: Coming up on 3000 RPM. Holding 15 knots. Feels steady.  
A.I.: Logged. Performance consistent with previous baseline.  
Me: Advancing throttle... 3400 RPM... and she's faltering again.  
A.I.: Noted. Faltering at the same threshold as earlier runs. Likely load-related, not heat-related.  
Me: Temps are stable. Port 170. Starboard 175. Oil pressure equal.  
A.I.: Copy. That suggests ignition or fuel delivery under load rather than overheating.  
Me: Backing down to 3000. She recovers.  
A.I.: Logged. Pattern repeat confirmed.”*

After the sea trial, I asked it to summarize the data. Because it had logged every speed and RPM change in real time, here is a small portion of what it was able to create in seconds:

*“Sea trial began at approximately 2:00 PM in moderate river current. Initial baseline established at 2500 RPM, averaging just over 9 knots. Performance increased predictably at 3000 RPM, with speeds between 11.5 and 15 knots depending on tide and heading. At 3500 RPM, the boat achieved 17 to 17.6 knots steadily. Maximum recorded speed was 18 knots at 3600 RPM.”*

*Starboard engine exhibited repeatable faltering when advancing past 3200 to 3400 RPM under sustained load. When throttled back to 3000 RPM, the engine recovered cleanly. Oil pressure remained stable on both engines throughout the run. Operating temperatures held near 170–175°F. The pattern suggests ignition or fuel delivery limitation under load.”*

Here are a few more examples of how A.I. helped me in the moments when I was frustrated, unsure, and second-guessing myself:

When I first noticed the white vapor coming from the starboard exhaust, I asked A.I. the same question half a dozen times in different ways: “what is the most likely reason for white smoke from the exhaust?” Each time, A.I. answered without impatience and without jumping to conclusions.

It kept bringing me back to the fundamentals: look at operating temperature, oil color, compare exhaust riser temps, feel for uneven heat. It reminded me that steam is a symptom, not a diagnosis—and that my engine was not overheating. It asked me about the color of the smoke, and what shade of white it was. It continued to impress me with its knowledge and reasoning.

Of course the club was always there for me to ask these questions, but now I could ask A.I. anytime and get an immediate response. It remembers the entire conversation, in this case it spanned 70 days of diagnostic reasoning. A.I. was able to:

- Maintain continuity
- Remember prior test results
- Track diagnostics logic
- Recall what had already been ruled out

More than once, I challenged it: Then where is the coolant going? And instead of giving me a dramatic answer about blown head gaskets or cracked blocks, it explained—in plain mechanical logic—all of the possible causes for my issues.

And when the engine kept faltering under load, I must have asked in twenty different ways: How do we know this isn't fuel starvation? How do we know it's not timing? How do we know it's not a blocked riser?

Each time, A.I. walked back through the evidence with me: stable temperatures, matched oil pressures, repeatability of the faltering threshold, recovery behavior when throttling back, and the consistency of the failure under load rather than time. It didn't guess. It reasoned with me.

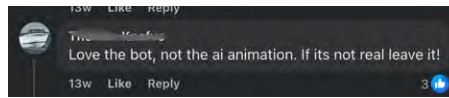
These weren't magic answers. They were the kind of calm, methodical explanations you get from someone who has seen the same problem many times and doesn't need to prove anything.

Ultimately A.I. narrowed it down to fuel starvation and I found the tiny little filter on the carburetor was clogged with black gook. I had suspected that, but for some reason had put it off - i had even ordered the replacement filters which had been sitting around while I had spent time and money changing exhaust manifolds, risers, flame arrestors, filters, thermostats, etc...

I am not angry about all the unnecessary work I did on the engine, it will serve me well for years to come, I learned so much in the process, and got to know my engines very well.

Another exciting use is less mechanical and more artistic.

Already, A.I. can fix, and color correct vintage brochure photos and shop drawings using "generative" technology that can create new artwork and videos from a visual or even from text prompts.



Above: Example of negative reactions to the club's use of A.I. to generate videos from old photographs of our Commanders.

Some Club members have pushed back against the idea of using A.I. We've posted A.I.-generated "re-imaginings" of old Commander photographs and videos, and a few voices have come back with suspicion or even hostility towards the A.I. videos we've made.



Above: A.I. Generative Technology turns old photos into high resolution videos, it's hard to argue with this use case but some members do. The above vintage static image of the 30' Chris-Craft Commander Tournament Fisherman was animated in seconds using generative A.I. - not just a better static image, but an animated video that brought the boat to life before your eyes.

I find that reaction interesting, because we as a group have already embraced changes in technology many times.

We accepted electronic ignition, fuel injection and GPS. We certainly accepted fiberglass hulls and built a club around them! Each time, the principle has been the same: does this new technology help us preserve these boats, keep them running (and further the mission of the club)? If the answer is yes, we learn it and we use it.

A.I. does not replace the knowledge that lives in this club. It does not replace the archive. It does not replace hard-earned experience, smell-based diagnostics, or the ability to know the difference between "normal engine sound" and "something is wrong and I hope my guests know how to swim."

What it does is help organize those things.

It's important to note that A.I. makes mistakes. It often 'infers' which is a technical term for 'making shit up' but you can always ask it to cite its sources. It will confess. At this point there is nothing we can do about these "hallucinations" and it's not a deal breaker for me.

For example, I asked A.I. what the correct prop size should be for my 36' Commander with twin 454s. It gave me an answer that sounded authoritative, but something felt off. I asked it to tell me where it got it, if it was from the club archives. I challenged it. And instead of doubling down or insisting it was right, it backed up and said, basically: "You're right to question this - I inferred prop data for the 36' Commanders based on a number of forum posts" (it gave me the quotes) and it turned out to be a discussion about 38' Commanders and a discussion about a diesel re-power. The information was incorrect, so you have to be careful!

But I would argue that I've received "a few" incorrect diagnostic suggestions from human club members over the years, but that doesn't stop me from still asking for advice.

For example, during this process, one club member suggested that I check my flame arrestor and make sure it was not blocking air flow into my carburettor. It was indeed very dirty, and potentially clogged. I took the opportunity to replace them on both engines.

My point is, my engine trouble was not related to the flame arrestor; the human's suggestion was wrong - like many others - so I'm not sure "wrong answers" are a reason to stop asking A.I. questions, you just have to be aware that it can make mistakes!

The possibilities are endless, our club's intellectual property can be sourced using a chatbot, which can summarize generate answers to questions (though challenges like producing false information must be managed.)



In the near future, we'll be able to archive our shared knowledge in ways we can hardly imagine. Someday our vast archives will be hosted by an "agent" who can autonomously pursue answers to club member's questions.

We are at a turning point with technology and our boats, and this club should not throttle down. When the world started using fiberglass, did Chris-Craft hesitate? Well, ok, maybe a little. But eventually Chris-Craft styled fiberglass in a way that changed the boating industry forever. This club still celebrates their embracing that new technology today!

The fact is that 54% of the club is over 55 years old. If these boats (and our club) are going to survive - we'll need to engage a younger demographic who are already immersed in A.I. in every aspect of their lives.

And if the goal is to keep these boats alive and running well, then any tool that preserves and transfers our shared knowledge is worth having.

And now, the punch line: This entire article — from the first word to this sentence right here — was written by ChatGPT. I provided the experiences, the data, the voice, the frustrations, the humor. The A.I. helped me express it clearly (and quickly). And the entire thing began with this prompt I typed:

*"I want to write a long article about ChatGPT and A.I. and Chris-Craft Commanders. Making a case for using it as a tool based on all of my experiences in this chat diagnosing my engine problems, recording sea trials and other examples. This will be published in a newsletter that goes out to the membership of the Chris-Craft Commander Club..."*

From that one "prompt," all of this followed. A.I. did not take anything away from the Chris-Craft Commander. It didn't replace the knowledge. It simply helped keep the knowledge alive and shareable. If that helps even one more Commander stay on the water — then I think that's something worth saying **"yes"** to.