

# *Is it All in the Boat Name?*



**A RECENT** well-funded government survey of boating publications determined that the number one topic for back page columnists over the last 75 years is boat names. That put a lot of pressure on me; sure, I have written about snap-shackle lubrication, the correlation between sailing knots and reading skills in grade six students as well as the implication of cross-border shopping on the price of cocktail mix. But never on boat names.

In the solace of my own cockpit, I pondered why I had not. Was it that I was afraid of boat names – had a boat named Windsong or Wet Dream bitten me as a child? Did I feel outsmarted by clever names like Fender Bender, Sails Call or Miss Informed?

Fortunately, just as my pop-psych analysis began to interfere with my cooler re-visit timing, Dirk Kneulman sailed by in his Etchells 22.

Those of you who follow the Canadian boat building and competitive racing worlds are well familiar with Dirk. He is the multi-time Etchells World Champ, Canadian Snipe Champ and has many other accomplishments on the water. And is an all-round nice guy, so much so that Canada's Cup/Olympic star Terry McLaughlin named his first son in Dirk's honour. (Terry assures me that is the correct reason and notes that Dirk McLaughlin resembles his father quite closely).

Back in the day, the Kneulman family founded Ontario Yachts in Oakville as a company that built all sorts of favourites like the Ontario 32 and the Viking 22 and 28. When the keelboat market fell apart in the late 80s, Dirk re-engineered the company to build small boats when nobody much cared about them and today they do OK building Sonars, Ideal 18's, E22's, Albacores and Optimists.

But what has any of this got to do with boat names, you ask as you restlessly flip to the next page, only to discover you are at the end of the magazine. For years, Dirk's boats have carried the name Wavelength, which I had always figured was one of those cutesy sailor's puns. Turns out that Dirk picked the name from the 1978 Van Morrison classic song. Besides all his boating credentials Dirk is also a music aficionado and sometime player with The Boat Shop Blues Boys, a band made up of fiberglass rats and buddies.

One day in the shop things were running late. It was at the time Dirk had some personal upheaval and in general he had da blues so they were listening to Sonny Terry. From the lyrics, he was inspired to switch boat names. The lyrics he recalls ran something like 'she was a good woman, just been treated wrong.' The next Etchells was called Cruel Jane. When she was finished, Cruel Jane was embellished with surfboard pinup graphics and the name stuck. All of Dirk's Etchells now carry the Cruel Jane name and he's done pretty well with them.

However, it didn't stop there. When Hank Lammens and some other pals decided to get out on the Etchells course, they dug a beater out of the Ontario Yachts yard. It was so scratched up and trashy looking, they saw art in it and added to the tradition by naming it Skanky Jane. The family nature of this publication prevents me from discussing the graphics. A powerboat to support the Etchells? That's Tender Jane. Awwwww.

So there you have it. At long last we deliver a column on boat names. Next issue, back to more vital issues: "Flossing – does it really prevent boater gum problems?"