

# *A.O.M.C.I. International Meet Special Report*

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The dominance of the two-cycle engines was interrupted briefly in 1932 when the Marquis de Soriano, of Spain, reached 60.15 mph with a six-cylinder, four cycle engine of his own manufacture.

This may have been the first outboard to reach a mile a minute.

Two years later, in 1934, a Soriano engine again raised the record, this time to 65.21 mph. The driver was Jean Dupuy, of Paris, France. More about Dupuy and the Soriano engines later.

Now lets get to the 1936-1954 period when a number of wealthy sportsmen spent a lot of their wealth chasing the record, even to having special engines custom-built from scratch — all of which conformed to the U.I.M.'s displacement limit of one liter, or 61 cubic inches maximum. Earlier I mentioned that French driver Jean Dupuy had used a Soriano engine in 1934 to interrupt briefly the 4-60's reign. Dupuy and the Sorianos were to be major players in the 1936 to 1954 period.

Sometime in the very early 1930s, a Spanish nobleman, the Marquis de Soriano, got the outboard bug and engaged a talented French engine designer, Paul Bonnemaïson, to create a "cost is no object" outboard to end all outboards. The result was an aluminum, one-liter, opposed six-cylinder, four-cycle engine sporting a single overhead camshaft on each head. A big super-charger crammed enough air into the engine to produce a then amazing 85 hp at 5,000 rpm. In essence, all of the top race car engine technology of the time was incorporated into this outboard motor. The lower unit, or gearcase, was equally advanced and carried two propellers - one at the front and one at the rear - turning in opposite directions. It

was one of these engines that Dupuy used in his 65.21 mph run in 1934.

After building 15 to 20 of these fabulous — but costly — engines, the Marquis de Soriano apparently lost interest in being an outboard manufacturer. Maybe he learned, as most outboard manufacturers do, that there is no money to be made building racing engines!

Determined to bring the record back to France, Jean Dupuy stepped in at this point. He surely had the wherewithal to do just that, as a member of a very rich French publishing family that owned a number of newspapers. And, it didn't hurt that he was married to an American millionairess, Dorothy Spreckels of the Spreckels sugar family.

Dupuy bought the whole Soriano Operation - engines, tooling, boats, even the services of designer Paul Bonnemaïson and his mechanics - and moved the whole shebang to Paris. There he built a few more of the original Sorianos to be sold at outrageous prices. One of these was bought by Gar Wood for his outboard-racing son, Gar Junior.

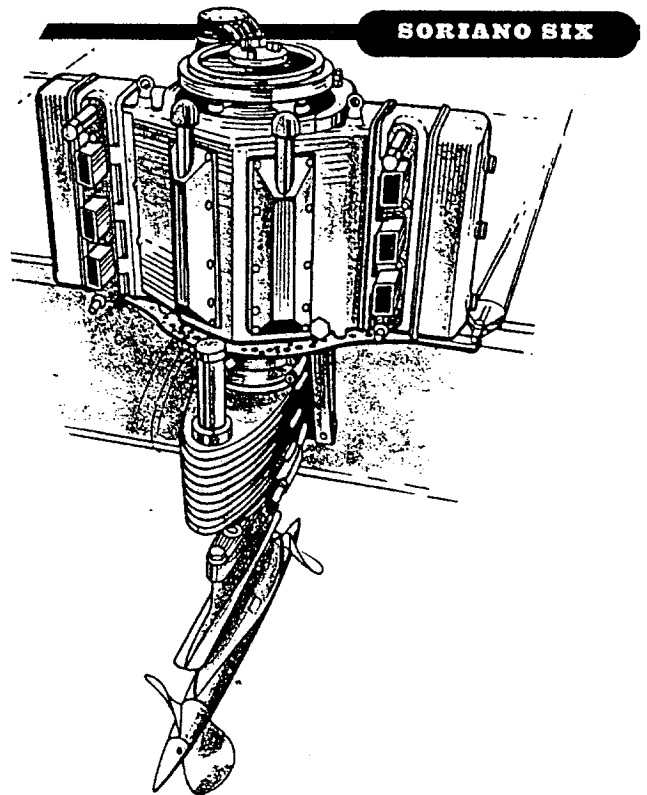
Dupuy and Bonnemaïson then redesigned the Soriano, developing new cylinder heads with double overhead camshafts— reportedly bringing the Dower up from 85 to 102 hp. Even more interesting, they scrapped the original Soriano gearcase and replaced it with a gearbox located above the bottom of the boat. A long propeller shaft — about four feet long — extended aft and downward from the gearbox at a 6 degree angle. At speed, only a foot or two of propshaft and a small three-bladed prop were in the water. The prop turned 10,000rpm when the engine was at its 6,000 rpm peak speed.

Now that he had the hardware to go after Coleman's record, Dupuy realized that the American wooden hydros were far faster than his aluminum boats. He went to the New York Boat Show in January, 1936, and ordered a custom hydro from an American boat builder, Don Flowers. All of this paid off in August, 1936, when Dupuy reclaimed the record at 74.39 mph, 5 miles better than Coleman had done.

Collectors — remember that Soriano which Gar Wood bought from Jean Dupuy in the mid-1930s? Sometime in the late 1950s, during my Mercury days, we bought that engine. I last saw it circa 1960, stored in the race car garage at Mercury Engineering in Oshkosh, Wisconsin. Now there's a tip for a collector! (Maybe Bill Steele knows what happened to it.)

In 1939 the stubborn Jean Dupuy struck again. His Dupuy-Soriano, now bumped up to 115 hp at 6500 rpm, pushed a Jacoby hydro to 79.04 mph. And there the record sat for 15 years — including the World War II era. Dupuy never returned to the chase after WW II. I seem to recall a report that — and this is stretching the old memory — that he and his wife were en route to a formal dinner soon after the war — on a motorcycle because of the gasoline shortage in France. Reportedly some part of the evening clothes got caught in the wheel, the bike flipped and Jean lost a leg in the ensuing accident. I've never heard that Dupuy ever sold one of his Dupuy-Sorianos nor do I know where one might be seen today. Sorry collectors!

The post-war resumption of the record hunt took place in September, 1953. The three Italian Leto di Priolo brothers - Dore, Carlo and Massimo - were quick to recognize the superiority of the 3-point hydros being developed in the U.S. Horsepower for horsepower, the new 3-pointers would easily outrun the single-step hydros used in the pre-war record runs. They saw an opportunity to grab the record with relatively modest horsepower.



The brothers decide that the ideal boat would be an enlarged version of the 11 foot Swift Big Dee hydro being manufactured right here in Mount Dora, FL. So, they had a 12 foot version of the Swift built for them in Italy by a woodworker just beginning to build boats — a fellow named Angelo Molinari, later to become famous as the originator of the tunnel boat.

The brothers used one of the old, single camshaft Soriano engines to which they fitted a new and larger supercharger to get 100 hp at 6,000 rpm. Somehow they got hold of one of the 4-foot long Dupuy-Soriano lower units and broke Dupuy's 15 year old record by 4 mph, hitting 83.473 mph with Massimo Leto di Priolo at the wheel.