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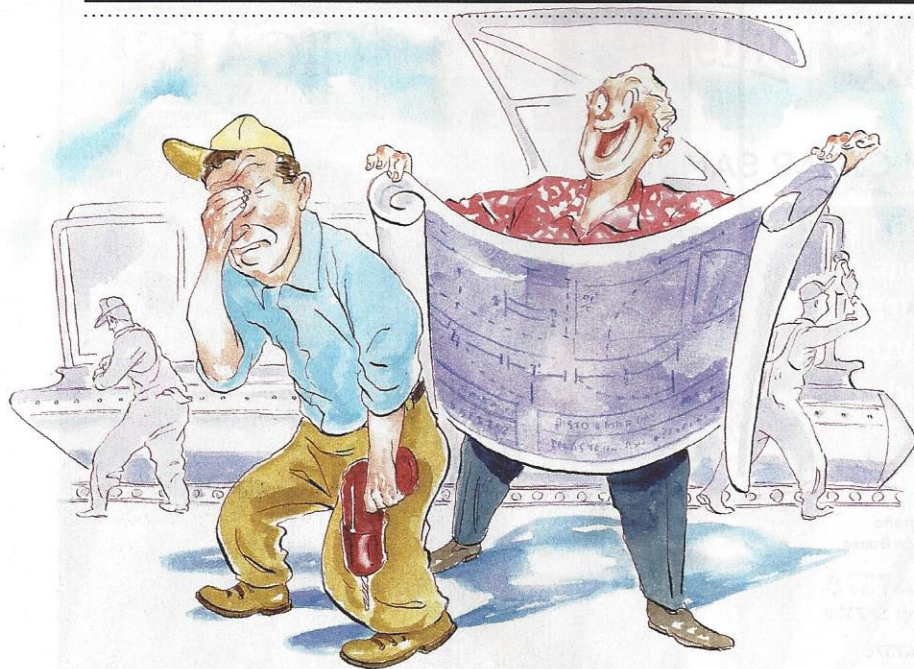
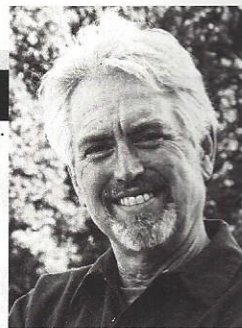
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## WHO YOU CALLIN' GOOFY?

One man's great idea bumps into engineering ego

**W**hen he walked into the Lake View Inn, our old friend Malcolm Sohм was greeted with a resounding chorus of "Goof! Goof!" It was not a derisive chant. Only the IRS and the DMV know the man as Malcolm. To the world at large he's known as Goofy, a nickname he's owned since 1972.

How Malcolm became Goofy is a long story that involves green beer for lunch on St. Patrick's Day, a Santa suit and a minibike, and an ill-fated dare to lap the halls of Oshkosh High School. "What a goofy thing to do!" exclaimed Principal Rohm as Malcolm lay sprawled on the terrazzo. It was that easy.

Life for Goofy and his wife, Terry, took a turn for the worse in 1995 when their 21-year-old daughter was diagnosed with AIDS, pretty much a death sentence in those days. Goofy was running a one-man body shop south of Oshkosh, Wisconsin, at the time.

"I sat in my shop, and knowing

I would lose my daughter, I needed to create something for the future. I looked at my pontoon boat, and the old lightbulb went off," Goofy told me in his funny, Yogi Bear voice. "I wanted to be able to run across Lake Winnebago on a rough day and have it ride like a Scarab and realized I needed to keep the front end up. I C-clamped two pieces of aluminum to the fins on the bow of my boat's tubes, and it made a big difference. I had Terry drive

while I watched the water pattern under the boat and figured it out."

Thus was born the TAP Fin System, for which Goofy received a patent in 1999. A chine welded to the length of the pontoon tubes, TAP has a lip that captures energy from water flowing off the tubes and lifts the boat to reduce drag and improve handling and the ride. Imagining the income from licensing his patent to pontoon builders, Goofy started making the rounds.

"I ran into a lot of not-invented-here attitude," he explained. "A lot of the engineers didn't want to believe a guy named Goofy from Oshkosh had come up with a better-working system. They all have some sort of fin system, but TAP still works best."

Goofy did license TAP for a few years, and he sells about 100 kits annually directly to boat owners. He and Terry recently moved to North Carolina.

Back for a visit this winter, Goofy took a Lake View bar stool next to mine and whispered over his soda: "I've got another trick up my sleeve. I've solved the problem of vortation on these big pontoons, all the turbulence that cavitates the prop. My attorney is writing the patent. I've got them again!"

I think "vortation" is a Goofism. Maybe this time boatbuilders won't let ego get in the way of a good idea. Even if that idea comes from a guy named Goofy.

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