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RED, RIGHT, RETURN

THE PEOPLE WE MEET



Malcolm "Goofy" Sohm

>> Pontoon Boat Inventor Extraordinaire

Do you mind if I call you Goofy?

I'd be insulted if you didn't.

So, you're an inventor?

Kinda, yeah.

Can you give me an example?

My first invention was in 1988. I came up with an idea to make launching and retrieving my pontoon boat easier.

What was it?

It was a bracket mounted on the bow that kept the boat on the trailer until I released it. I patented it in 1995.

And you made millions?

I went to every trailer manufacturer and boatbuilder. They all said, "The weight of the boat keeps it on the

trailer; it's a non-issue." My butt. These guys obviously never launched a boat before. I've let the patent expire.

Did you stop inventing?

No—I'm focused on my new idea, which I hope will be more lucrative.

What is it?

It's a set of fins. I call it TAP, for Technically Advanced Performance. They're specifically designed for pontoon boats to capture energy between the hulls and regenerate it downward. The force lifts the boat, and forward edges help the boat turn.

And how's that going?

So far I've gotten one builder to lease the rights. I get a royalty.

What did you do before this?

I owned an auto body shop for 35 years.

What's next?

I love pontoon boats and want to build one that's meant for rescues. Pontoon boats have little draft, 6" to 10", and are incredibly stable. Great for when rivers flood.

Anywhere else?

Remember all those fires that happened in the Everglades? You couldn't get a fire engine or boat in there. But you could have run a pontoon boat with a pumper onboard, no problem. It's an idea that's on the back burner. But I'm throwing logs on the fire.

—PHIL SCOTT