

## **BIO, PART I: 1955 – 1967 (you gotta see what happened in 1967!)**

Born in Vermont as Cathy Austin, my family had a small dairy farm with just a few cows and a horse left by the time I was 4. We also had one dog and one cat, a duck (until it got hit by the car) and some bunnies. Activities I learned at a young age included milking a cow, riding a horse, target shooting, running races, playing softball, basketball, swimming, sledding, snow skiing, ice skating, roller skating and bowling.

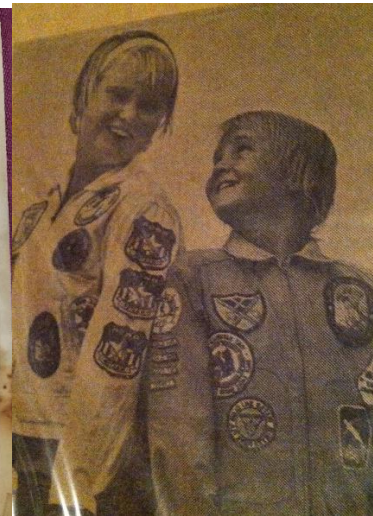


We moved to Florida after dad learned to water ski. The introduction to water skiing came about when my brother, who was a US Marine assigned to the White House when Kennedy was President, dared dad to try skiing and gave dad all the wrong instructions. Dad knew a trick was being played on him but got up right away and came in and told mom, “That does it, Alice. We’re going to move to Florida and buy a boat.” By the summer, he had arranged to sell the farm animals.

We lived on the Gulf coast of central Florida and I started water skiing at age 6. I started to teach skiing at age 7 and when I was about 8, my dad let me drive the ski boat around a busy lake on the weekend ALONE! I started driving the boat for skiers when I was 10.

My older sister Linda and I became tournament skiers (slalom, tricks and jumping) and our mom Alice, older sister Georgeann, brother Butch (George III) and sister-in-law JoAnn, all joined us doing ski shows while dad George Jr, was in charge and coached. We skied in tournaments all over the south and in the annual National Water Ski Championships. Oh yeah, I helped drive to and from California at age

14! Dad said if I got stopped, we'd show Linda's driver's license (back then they did not have photographs on them, and people asked if we were twins).



Butch is the Marine on the right

Newspaper photo of Linda & me

### EXPO '67 WATER SKI TRIP:

At age 12, I was a member of an all-girl water ski team with Linda (aged 15) and 3 other older gals (who had to try out) for a trip from St Petersburg, FL to Montreal for Expo '67. It was a publicity stunt for the City of St Petersburg. Big sponsors included Mercury Marine (Carl Keikaffer loaned us his personal ocean racing houseboat), Sinclair Oil, Del Webb, Cypress Gardens Skis and the Florida Council of One Hundred.



We had to get vaccinations because of the polluted water we would be skiing in.





Ski trip publicity photo: Mary Fraas, me, Linda, Alice Roberts and Pat Markus.

The route took us from downtown St Pete, out of Tampa Bay under the Sunshine Skyway Bridge, south to Ft Myers, across Lake Okeechobee (longest non-stop distance my sister and I skied: 89 miles), out the St Lucie Canal, up the eastern seaboard using the Intercoastal Waterway as much as possible and into the Hudson River. Up near Albany, officials would not allow us to ski in and out of locks, so while we slept, dad and the other two men on the trip (organizer Jim Gray and a Mercury engineer), drove us through that approximate 4-mile section. We went through Lake Champlain to the St Lawrence Seaway, then down to Montreal. The

entire trip took 16 days and involved one engine fire and replacement overnight in St Augustine and the replacement of 2 lower units at Paris Island Marine Base that were damaged by hitting sandbars.

My sister skied the entire way except those 4 miles near Albany! Let me repeat



that: LINDA SKIED THE ENTIRE WAY!

There were always 2 of us skiing: her and one other. We'd last 2-3 hours and change off. Linda got a break or ate and kept going. This was all behind the 40' Drift-R-Cruise houseboat. We lived on the boat along the way and where we stopped in the evening is where we started the next morning.

Linda and me skiing north up the intercoastal water way on the east coast of Florida.

Twice Linda was on the water for over 13 hours. I remember skiing with her twice until 10:30 at night. We put on ski shows in major cities or Linda and I did shorter exhibitions. We were given the Keys to the City in a few places and gave Mayors 'Honorary Skier Certificates'. The press followed the trip up the coast. When we skied into the harbor in Montreal, boats began blasting their horns signaling their 'Welcome'!

A video clip of us skiing past the Statue of Liberty can be found on Getty Images at: <http://www.gettyimages.com/detail/video/five-women-in-bathing-suits-stand-on-back-of-boat-waving-news-footage/450779154> You will have to cut and paste or type the URL to see the video. They only sell images for download and it's really expensive.

