

BOAT SHOW MARKS 44 YEARS AT CEDAR POINT

The Progressive North America In-Water Boat Show at Cedar Point is among the longest running in-water shows in the nation. It will run August 25-28 for the 44th year.

There weren't many in-water shows anywhere when, in 1973, the Lake Erie Marine Trades Association initiated what rapidly became the largest show of its kind held annually on the Great Lakes. Not only was the idea of an in-water show pretty new, but Cedar Point provided the most unique setting of any in-water show in America.

Over the more than four decades since, more than one-half million boaters from Ohio, Michigan, Indiana and Pennsylvania have attended this event.

In an interview with Norm Schultz, who created the show and headed it up for 34 years before retiring, we get a feeling for the boat show's rich background.

"When we started it in 1973, our thinking was simply an end-of-season clearance boat sale," Schultz recalls. "We hoped 2,000 boaters might come but when over 5,000 showed up in three days, it was like – hello! . . . we've got the making for a major in-water boat show on our hands."

From less than 90 boats that first year, the show consumed all 300 docks and all adjacent land space in the north basin of Cedar Point Marina by 1975. To grow the show even more, Schultz began having temporary floating docks built to supplement the marina's existing fixed docks. For years, the show packed boats and displays into the North basin until, ultimately, a decision was made to move the show to Cedar Point's South harbor which, at that time, had no docks or infrastructure.

"Putting the show where it is today, in the South harbor, was a big challenge," says Schultz, "but doing it allowed us to triple the on-land accessory tents and displays, and grow the in-water dockage to whatever the boat dealers needed. To do it, we had to build a lot more floating docks because there were no permanent slips as there are today.

"We also had to bring in heavy permanent electrical power, transformers and a distribution system to power-up the entire event," continued Schultz. "But it was a great move for the exhibitors and visitors alike. When we were in the North harbor, we had to bring everyone up from the main parking lots by trams. In the South harbor, everyone could park adjacent to the show area."

If the move to the South harbor was historic, the dramatic change in show dates two years ago must be considered another milestone. For more than 40 years the show had been held after Labor Day. That timing was chosen because in those years Cedar Point was only open for two bonus weekends after Labor Day and traffic was not too large.

But the recent start of Cedar Point's tremendously successful HallowWeekends after Labor Day changed all that. The success of the two events, the boat show and HallowWeekends, held

simultaneously created traffic snarls and delays for the boaters coming to the show. So, LEMTA's moved the boat show into late August, away from the big HallowWeekends, and that has made it much more convenient for boaters to get to the show.

More than 12,000 visitors will again attend this year's boat show where they'll see more than 300 power and sailboats, plus marine accessory displays, on-water demonstrations and entertainment.

For complete show information, visit: www.cedarpointboatshow.com

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