

'Slo-Poke' only wants to race

• Results — 2D

By **SUSANNA SOMMERER**
Tribune Sports Writer

James Camp remembers the good ol' days, the days when powerboat racing was just that — powerboat racing.

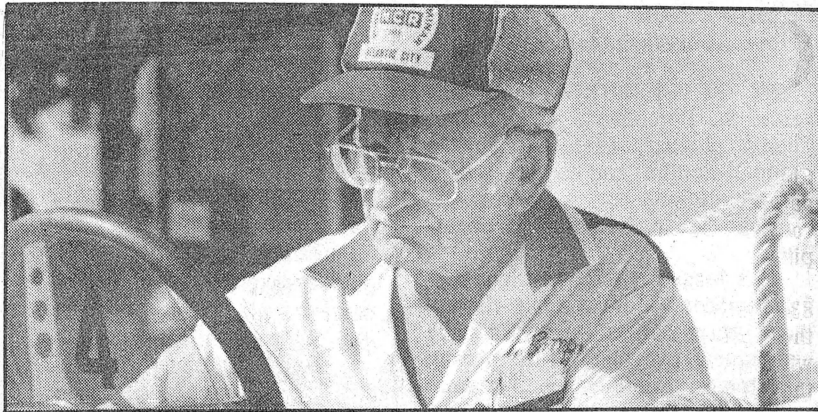
About five or six years ago, the evils of commercialism began creeping into the hydroplane circuit, threatening to turn the sport into one that only the upper-middle class and wealthy can afford.

"It use to be a sport. Now it's turned into a commercial," said Camp, at age 70 the oldest racer on the East Coast. "In the old days, the drivers were all helpful and interested in each other. Nowadays everyone tries to keep information about their engines and adjustments under the blanket. Everyone's trying to get an edge on everyone else because of the sponsorships available.

"Just look at the boats — Miller Lite, Michelob, Budweiser — painted across them."

Camp's not about to be someone's flying advertisement. His craft says Slo-Poke. Camp dipped the new 5-litre rig into the Lake Maggiore waters for the first time Saturday during the 10th Annual Suncoast Regatta.

After 40 years of racing and winning dozens of national titles in Jersey Speed Skiffs, flat bottoms and 7-litres, and carrying on two businesses — Camp Aircraft Parts and Camp Company — the ex-Army



Tribune photo by **DOUG CAVANAH**

James Camp is disturbed with the amount of commercialism in his sport.

flight instructor has taken on another challenge.

Bystanders and fellow drivers are muttering, "that old goat, that nut. When's he going to give it up."

Camp says never.

"When you retire, you don't live long. You lose your memory and your zest for life," said Camp, all 5-foot-2 of him.

Nor does it bother him when he hears people mumbling "that guy ought to get out of this."

He shuns the 52nd Street bravado of motor and beer company sponsorships and does all his own boat engine work.

"No one touches my engine. That's my hobby, just like some people play golf, tennis or fish," said Camp. "I have no intentions of quit-

ting. Some people jog to stay in shape. I just work."

And then some the past couple months, for Camp has busied himself fixing up the 5-litre craft he bought a year ago just so he'd have the chance to compete more.

"I didn't compete for five years in the '60s because most of the races for Speed Skiffs and flatbottoms were so far from home," said Camp, a Newark, N.J. resident who moved to Redington Beach 10 years ago. "It was too much trying to carry on my businesses and race. But I couldn't stand it. I got the itching.

"There are lots of races for 5-litres around here. I'll have a lot more chances to compete.

"Come hell or high water, if I gotta' have a paddle I'll be there."

