



Staff Photos by Skip Peterson

John O'Hara (right), wife Phyllis, Anna and Patrick

... Boat racing has become a family affair for them.

O'Haras love boat racing and that's no Malarkey

By Paul Meyer

Journal Herald Sports Writer

Maybe it all started when John O'Hara bought his white 1950 Ford.

Or perhaps it began a little later — when he'd go over to Elroy Spicker's garage to help work on Spicker's 48-class boat.

But whenever John O'Hara's fascination with boats and motors started, one thing is certain.

He loves boat racing. And so does his wife, Phyllis.

SO MUCH so, in fact, that Mrs. O'Hara serves as a one-woman pit crew for her husband.

"She's not necessarily mechanically inclined," said O'Hara, "and she's not real hot on engines. But she helps out as much as she can and

try to help John, that's all. But I do think I know more about engines than most women."

Mrs. O'Hara learned most of what she knows about engines when she took a night adult education course on auto mechanics at Fairmont West five years ago.

THAT WAS two years after it became apparent that boat racing was going to be a full-time hobby for her "hubbie."

And the O'Haras will be "relaxing" again this weekend when John races his 145-class "O'Hara's Malarkey" in the inboard hydroplane World Championships at Eastwood Lake.

If O'Hara has a typical performance, however, he won't be world champion.

Because in his seven years of racing, John has never won a race.

als in 1967 in Guntersville, Ala.," the Bellbrook resident recalled. "Ronnie Brunner (of Dayton) was just in front of me, but then he lost his spark plug wires and I passed him."

O'Hara's other "victory" came two years ago in Hillsdale, Mich.

WHY, then, does the 33-year-old Delco Products employee continue to load his family (12-year-old daughter Anna and four-year-old son Patrick) into his Chevrolet van and take off 12 weekends each summer?

"I like the competition," John says simply.

"He's got more fortitude than anybody I know," Phyllis acknowledged.

But O'Hara doesn't know where he acquired that trait.

"I wasn't an athlete in high school (Chaminade)," O'Hara

when he began dropping in at Spicker's garage.

Following Spicker's boat ("Blue Devil") a round for nine or 10 years and helping out in the pits got O'Hara interested in buying and racing his own boat.

His first racer was demolished in 1964 when it was struck by an automobile as the O'Haras returned from Martinesville, W. Va. That didn't stop him, though. Jim Davies built "Malarkey" for him in 1965 and O'Hara has been driving it ever since.

For the O'Hara family, which travels 25,000 miles each summer in search of a race, the life is satisfying.

"I LOVE IT," said Phyllis. "Really, it's the people we meet more than the racing that makes it fun. The people are great."

And their wanderings have