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for the man
whose first love
is wilderness.



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Cover photo from Douglas Morgan

A Little Boat That Flies

The hydrofoil is one of the newest designs in boats—at high speed, it lifts above the water and skims over the surface. Here's one you can build for less than \$100.

Photos courtesy American Plywood Association

HYDROFOIL fever hit us hard one day while we were innocently watching the seagulls glide past our conventional boat. When you're bobbing and tossing along over the chop and you happen to spot a gull skimming along smoothly through all that wide open airspace above the water, it slowly begins to dawn on you that there must be a better way to make use of the waterways. Why not build a simple little flying boat that will rise above it all and skim along up over the turbulence like the gulls do?

You can guess the rest. Pretty soon design discussions were flaring up,

pencils were scratching, and at last we settled on the basic ideas we wanted to include. The sort of boat we had in mind should be: small enough to carry or carry in a station wagon to the water; light enough for two men to carry without strain; versatile enough to make use of a wide variety of outboards; stable enough for easy, dependable handling, and most of all—fun to fly.

We wanted a boat that would provide the same feeling of free flight up above the waves that the seagull had demonstrated when we first started thinking along these lines.

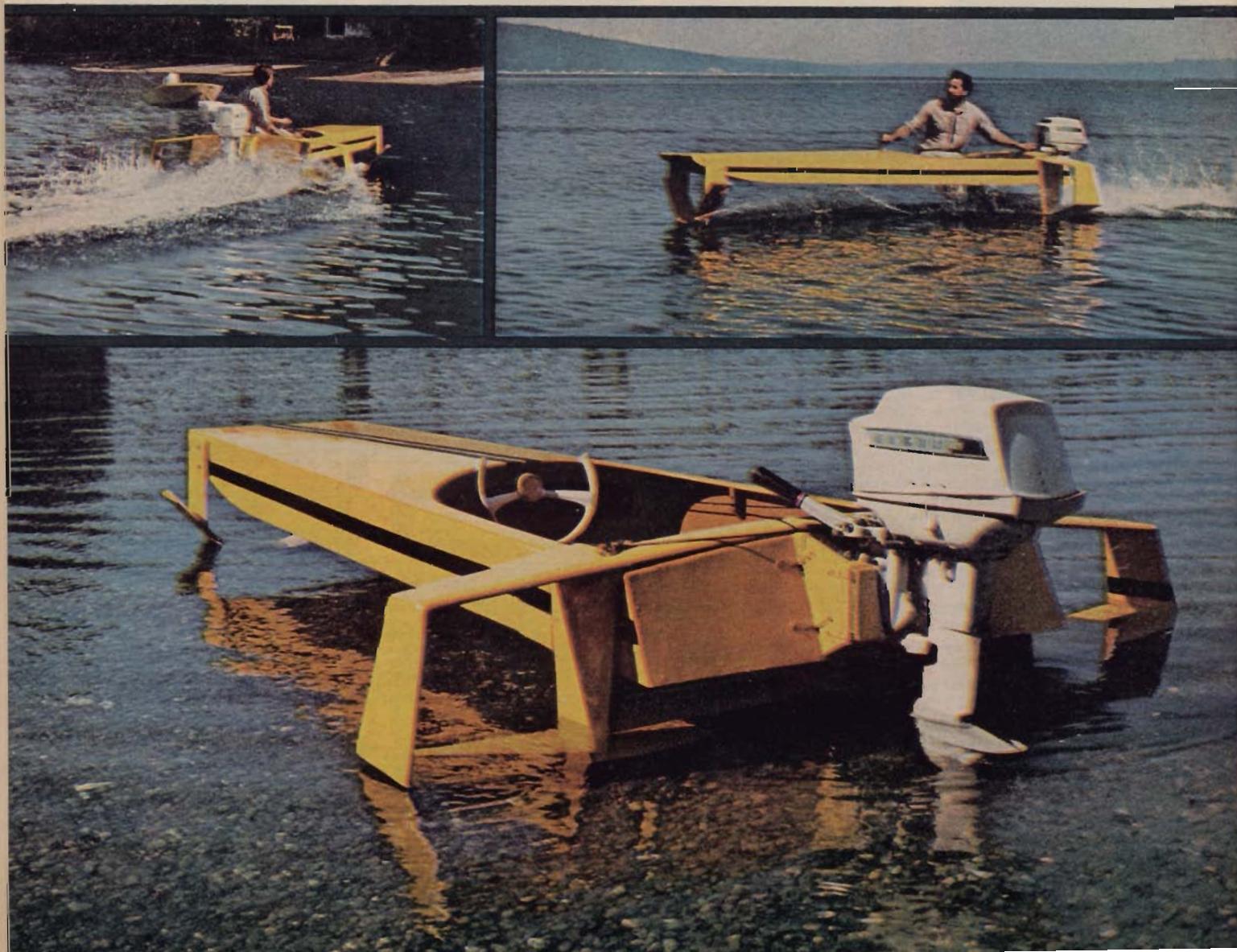
BY PETER STEVENSON

We came up with what we call the SportFoil.

To make it light we made use of the fact that plywood is fantastically strong for its weight when bent, and then stressed against this bend. The top decking is bent over and down at the sides, and the bottom sheet is bent up at the end, making an incredibly strong monocoque frame as a base for the wings, and weighing in at less than a hundred pounds.

The shape is obviously a simple one, functional and easy to build, requiring no involved jigs or difficult patterns to work with in (*continued on page 86*)

The hydrofoil is an eye opener whether in "flight" or sitting on its foils "at rest." With a 12-horsepower motor it jumps at 20 to 25 knots.



A LITTLE BOAT THAT FLIES

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order to make sure things come out straight. It takes about one week-end to build up the hull, and another to shape and attach the wings from clear, straight-grained douglas fir stock, using the shaping tricks shown in the plans.

Once the standard engine controls are hooked up and a smooth, glossy paint surface is on the hull and wings, you're ready for a "test flight."

What's it like to fly?

The difference between the ride of the big commercial hydrofoils and the SportFoil is a lot like the difference between flying a 747 or a Waco biplane. In the big hydrofoils, we had no noticeable feeling of flight—only an occasional pounding and jolting caused by vapor bubbles on the wings underwater. All sorts of complicated remedies are being tried to solve this problem, incidentally.

With the SportFoil, we took the simple way. We made the wings big and the hull light, to keep the wing-loading low.

Next, we went against many examples and placed the wings at the extreme far ends of the boat. With this "long wheelbase" approach, the boat 86 has little tendency to hobby-horse

back and forth, which alters not only wing loadings, but also angles of attack in short-base hydrofoils. The result in the SportFoil is an almost uncanny smoothness of flight—with no trace of vapor-cavitation problems.

Taxiing along before take-off, the SportFoil rides and handles like a boat much larger than its size. The submerged wings steady the boat against pitch and roll even at rest, but tend to make the steering a little more sluggish than you're probably used to in a boat this size. It feels more like you're handling a 24-foot boat than a 12-footer. All that changes, however, once she gets in her element.

Increase the gas a bit and you'll start to feel the bow slapping against the chop. Next, you begin to hear the waves drumming the hull bottom directly beneath you, and then before you have time to digest it, there is a sudden push of acceleration, and everything smooths out like glass. You're up free of the waves! You can ease off on the gas a little once the drag has dropped off. As you look ahead to try to gauge how fast you're skimming along over the waves, you slowly start to absorb the fact that

you're not feeling the waves that you see coming. After years of learning to prepare yourself for what's coming up in a boat, you find it doesn't make much difference any more.

Put her into a turn and the SportFoil banks through like a plane. The faster you run, the smoother and flatter she takes them. But it's a little hard to get used to giving it more gas in the turns at first. To make a smooth, graceful landing, ease off gradually on the throttle, and she'll settle down slowly; you'll feel a curious sense of surprise at being on the water again, even though you've never really left it. Cut the power completely in mid-flight, and she'll slow to stalling speed and then drop you back on the water.

We've had the SportFoil up and flying with as little as four horsepower. But for sporting around, you want something over five horses. Long-shaft engines have a slight advantage for this sort of work. But the standard engines pictured in action here will still provide ample altitude for that feeling of free flight over the water.

To order your plans for the SportFoil, send \$3.95 to: Stevenson Projects and Publications, Post Office Box 584, Del Mar, California 92014. Allow three weeks for delivery.

