

## Duffy owners say electric is the way to go

BY DOUG HUGHES  
Editor

With gas prices predicted to reach \$4 per gallon by November, boating with internal combustion engines, whether inboard or outboard, is becoming a very expensive pastime.

Whether your pleasure is cruising the waters of Lake Gaston for fun, or maybe trolling at four miles per hour up and down the lake for stripers, the cost can certainly be prohibitive.

Although improvements to gas engines such as fuel and oil injection have made these motors more economical and environment-friendly, a day on the water is still pretty expensive. Add routine maintenance to the equation, and operating costs can become astronomical.

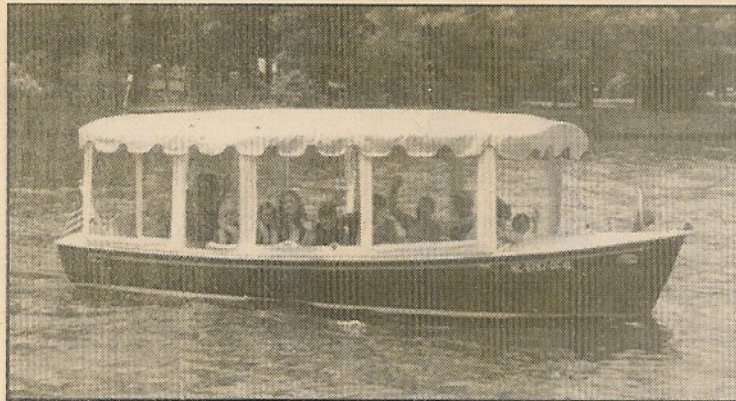
Al and Anne Hartley may have been slightly ahead of their time when, recognizing the benefits that could be derived from a much cheaper form of boating pleasure, not to mention much kinder to the environment, they established Four Seasons Electric Boats in 2002, and became the Duffy electric boat dealer for the area.

As is often the case with changing a way of life, most boaters have been slow to warm to the idea of cruising the lake under quiet and efficient electric power. Although top speeds on Duffys don't suit the "speed freak" in many boaters, two Lake Gaston property owners have been converted.

John Campbell says he fell in love with the Duffy when he saw it on the showroom floor. "I was struck by how beautiful it was. I had never seen a boat like (that) with a spectacular finish, mahogany trim, beautiful metal work, and a canopy" he said.

As with all such changes in the way we think, however, Campbell said he did plenty of research before he bought his 21-foot Duffy, including talking with other Duffy owners. Naturally, he had questions about whether the boat would be fast enough, and how long it would hold a charge, among others.

"Over the course of three or four cruises (on the Four Seasons demo boat)—some short and some long—in different weather conditions, I was



Contributed photos

**Top, Cindy Choi and son Yuhan enjoy a quiet, odor-free day on Lake Gaston in the family's Duffy electric powered catamaran. Above, the Campbell family and friends underway in July on their Duffy for a day of fun on the water at Lake Gaston.**

sold" Campbell said. "The boat is incredibly easy to drive and navigate, is very stable even in rough water, and is almost immediately like an old friend."

Campbell says he thought his wife was going to be a hard sell, so he lined up all his reasons why they should purchase the boat, not the least of which was its versatility.

With full see-through curtains, a cabin heater and heated seats, plus the ability to take along hot coffee or chocolate, the convenience of the boat means that the family can observe the changing seasons and the lake's natural beauty year around.

Campbell says wife Ann was already sold and didn't need any convincing. Although the family kept its Chaparral deck boat, Campbell says the kids, not just his but all kids, love the electric boat, and it has become the family favorite for time on the water.

Leo Choi, wife Cindy, and son Yuhan have a vacation home in St. Tammany, and enjoy their Duffy catamaran whenever they or their guests visit the lake.

Leo says there are a number of reasons why he likes the Duffy. First, he never has to

refuel except to keep the charger plugged in. "It's a hassle to fill up my Jet Ski," he says. He also enjoys the cover which blocks the sun and provides warmth when needed.

The family also enjoys the music from their CD player. "Since the engine is quiet, the CD sounds great," Choi says.

The family also likes the idea of reducing pollutants while saving on gas.

Choi says his Duffy is not a speedboat. "Obviously, for anyone looking for some speed, this boat is not for them. But then I have a Jet Ski for that," he says.

Choi is also impressed with the range of the boat. "The battery range seems pretty impressive. I've yet to come close to 50 percent (power remaining) even after 2-3 hours of cruising."

The Choi and Campbell families have obviously been converted to the joys of quiet and peaceful boating on Lake Gaston.

For more information, or to take a test cruise in a Duffy, visit Al and Anne Hartley at Four Seasons Electric Boats, on the north end of Eaton Ferry Bridge. Don't forget to bring your camera for closeups of the lake's wildlife, since they won't hear you coming.