

# Automotive, Marine Parts Differ In More Than Just What They Cost

BY TOM SHAW

**W**hat is the value of your life, the lives of your family and friends, or the value of your boat?

How many times in these cost-conscious days have you heard somebody tell you they can get engine parts cheaper?

How many times have you been surprised at the price of repair parts at a marine supplier and gone hunting for a better bargain?

We all want to keep boating costs down, but it is a major error to go to an automotive parts supplier when you have a sick engine. Auto parts and marine parts look very much the same, but there is a vast difference—and the difference is safety.

Unfortunately, too many auto mechanics do not understand that difference. They may do fine work, but you had best buy the parts yourself. Here's why:

A gasoline leak in your car has a good chance of finding its way to the ground where it can safely evaporate, and there is a sufficient air flow under the hood of your car to dissipate gasoline vapor.

In your boat, any leaking gasoline fumes eventually end up in the bilge, since they are heavier than air. There is not much air circulation in a bilge and nowhere for vapor to go. The result is a build-up of a gas/air mixture just waiting for a spark.

Marine parts such as alternators, starters and distributors are explosion-protected. They are designed to shield any sparks inside the unit and will not provide a source of igni-

tion for explosive gases should they be present.

Marine carburetors, fuel pumps and fuel hoses are specifically built to prevent the escape of gasoline or gasoline fumes into the bilge.

Standard for the manufacture of marine parts have been established by the Coast Guard, Underwriters Laboratory and other industry groups—and for a very good reason.

Every season we read stories about boats exploding at fuel docks or while under way, and most of the time an accumulation of gasoline vapor and air was ignited by an unprotected electrical source.

If you are using automotive parts, you not only provide fuel for the bomb, you provide the detonator as well. They

money saved in purchasing cheaper automotive parts for your engine is definitely not worth it.

When doing your annual maintenance, why not have your boat checked by a qualified member of the Coast Guard Auxiliary? The service is free and only takes a few minutes. The examiner will help you check all hoses and clamps and your backfire flame arrestor and will look for required Coast Guard certifications.

To get a free safety check call the Coast Guard Boating Safety Hotline at 1-800-368-5647.

*Tom Shaw is branch chief for vessel safety, U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary, Wilmington.*

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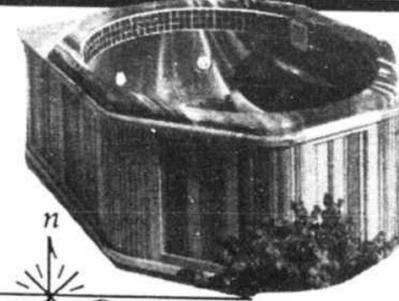
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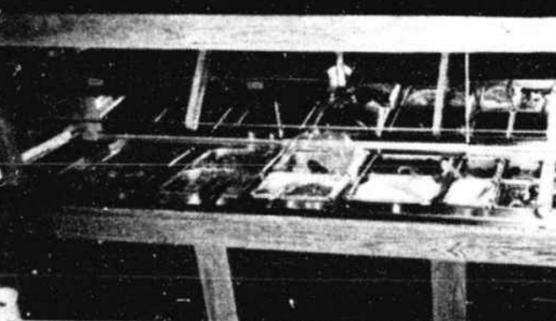
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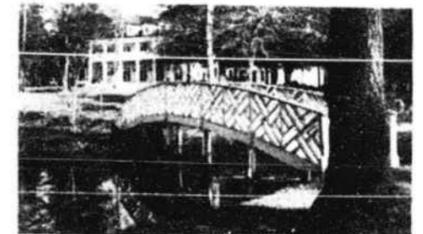
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