



HydroHoist Boat Lifts • HyPower • Rotek

To: Local Media  
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## **HydroHoist Marine Group Celebrates Major Milestone Market Originator – Industry Innovator**

HydroHoist Marine Group (HMG) is celebrating its 50<sup>th</sup> year in business.

“We are proud of the legacy of quality boat lift manufacturing that has made HydroHoist a household name throughout the boating community - in the United States and internationally,” said CEO Mick Webber.

HydroHoist received the first patent for a hydro-pneumatic boat lift, and has never looked back since its humble beginnings in 1964.

The company was launched when Henry Rutter invented the first hydro-pneumatic boat lift at Hi-Lift Marina on Grand Lake. Rutter obtained a patent and called his invention HydroHoist.

“Initially the need for the HydroHoist boat lift was created because of a restriction for land space for boat storage,” said Webber.

“Boat owners were demanding convenience and immediacy of use, and Rutter’s boat lift system offered dry storage in the water for a price comparable to land space. Remarkably, some of the original hoists are still in use,” Webber said.

Rutter found the traditional winching method used at his marina was impractical on floating docks because they could not support the extra weight of the winch. Rutter then intended to build a quick, economical system that displaced the water by air and formed a free-floating lift. His first lift mechanism consisted of inverted fiberglass tubs and a used vacuum cleaner motor that blew air in the inverted tubs, forcing the water out and raising the boat and lift above the surface of the water.

Once word of Rutter’s invention became known, demand from boat owners increased, first in northeastern Oklahoma, and then throughout the Midwest. By 1971 he sold his marina and, along with his brothers Harold and Neal, moved the company into an old World War II munitions plant in Claremore, where the corporate office still remains today.

During the 1970s and 1980s the industry expanded to meet consumer demand to hoist a number of different vessels – from personal watercraft, to lake cruisers, houseboats, sea planes, submarines, Coast Guard cutters, and other military boats.

HydroHoist Marine Group manufactures and sells lifts ranging from 900 pound drive-on docking platforms for PWCs to lifts that will accommodate 130,000 pound watercraft. HydroHoist has grown to serve a worldwide marketplace in all aspects of pleasure craft, service boats, Personal Water Craft (PWCs) and other floating vessels.

“HydroHoist offers a superior product, exacting craftsmanship, and commitment to customer satisfaction, which includes the strongest warranty in the business,” Webber stated.

In 1976 a controlling interest in the firm was bought by Ron Liebl, a former project engineer at North American Rockwell. Rutter stayed on as a consultant and project developer and continued working for the business until he retired in 1984.

The business continued selling boatlifts throughout the next decade. Liebl hired a sales representative to step up the efforts of forming a strong dealer network throughout the country. His choice of candidates was a young man – fresh out of college - who had worked at HydroHoist during high school loading trucks. Mick Webber hit the highways and back roads of America eventually developing the strongest system of boatlift dealers in the nation – still true today.

In 1990 Liebl began looking for a prospective buyer of HydroHoist and that person was Joe Cox. Cox bought half of Liebl’s shares as well as Rutter’s patents, trademarks, and copyrights. Cox had worked for many years with Borg-Warner and had recently retired as CEO of Centrilift- Hughes.

Cox set up a research and development department. He hired top level engineers to create new products and redesign and improve on the company’s existing line. He continued building on the strength of the dealer network by offering exclusive dealerships and distribution sites.

In 2006 Cox decided to sell his shares of the company and retire to spend more time with his family. The natural successor was the man who started work at HydroHoist in his teens and had over the years gone from sales representative, to marketing and sales director, to chief operating officer to CEO and President, Mick Webber.

Today, HydroHoist has 5 distribution warehouses located throughout the United States – California, Oklahoma, Texas, Missouri and Tennessee - and a network of more than 600 dealers.

“Our distribution network is unique to our industry – the strength of our dealers is the strength of our company. We are privileged to have some of the hardest-working people in the industry associated with HydroHoist. Some of our dealers have been with us for more than 35 years, and we are supported by the best names in the business,” Webber said.

“We never take for granted that we’ve been in business for 50 years. We actually use the tradition as a driving force to consistently improve our products.”

“The past year has seen some great innovations with enhancements to our existing products, the introduction of our new Air-Assist series of hoists, and our new line of accessories,” said Webber.

Accessories include a new push-button control, eliminating much of the confusion that some first-time hoist owners encounter when getting accustomed to lifting and launching their boat. The HydroGuard Boat

Protection Package, which includes corner bumpers and bow guide, is the perfect complement to the HydroHoist boat lift line.

The goal is to give their best effort at protecting customer's boats from the second they enter the slip, until they are fully departed.

“HydroHoist Marine Group has come a long way in 50 years. We are excited to celebrate this milestone, but the work never stops. Our team is constantly looking toward the next best thing to assist our customers. That aspect of the business will never change. We are happy to be the market originator and will continue to be the industry innovator,” Webber said.

HydroHoist Marine Group also includes HyPower Power Pedestals and Rotek.

HyPower provides a line of easy-to-maintain, configurable, extra durable power pedestals, dock boxes, fire centers, light centers and electrical power hookups suited for marina and RV applications. The product's patented PowerSnap technology allows users to swiftly replace broken power panels by turning the power off, unscrewing four screws and swapping out the old panel for a brand new one on the spot. High-pressure injection-molding cases make HyPower products – including the PowerPort and EnergyMate – weather tight, and as an added bonus the products can be mounted on a weather-proof base, making it literally a snap to remove the power head in preparation for winter or severe storms.

Rotek is a support division of HydroHoist Marine Group. They provide superior rotomolding services – including the industry-known blue tanks for HydroHoist boat lifts, and additionally provide services to several Fortune 100 companies.

“We're always looking for new ways to really extend the gap between our products and the competition,” asserts Webber. “Our team is just phenomenal and it's because of them that we are able to look ahead three to five years to develop new products and new markets,” Webber said.

HydroHoist Marine Group – under the leadership of Webber - has 75 employees and does business worldwide. The company exports products to 23 countries and has an international distributor and dealer network in more than 18 countries.

“We are proud to have some of the highest customer satisfaction ratings and product resale values in the industry and work hard to not only maintain our reputation, but to consistently improve upon it. We accomplish this by pushing to continually reassess the potential applications of our product, as well as breaking open new markets in the process,” said Webber.

All of its products – which include the UltraLift-2, UL2 Shallow Water, UL2 Front Mount, Side-Tie 'B' Model, Drive-on Air Assist and HP2XL, are manufactured at the company's Oklahoma fabrication facilities.

Every model still lives up to the original mission of blending the advantages of dry dock storage and the convenience of in-water storage.

“We strive to build the best by focusing on innovation as well as offer the best in customer service – this is why we have generations of families who are HydroHoist users,” Webber said.

## **Side Bar: Timeline of HydroHoist Product Releases:**

- 1964** Original invention by the founder of HydroHoist®.
- 1969** First-ever patent for a water displacement-by-air boat lift was awarded to the HydroHoist® Company.
- 1972** First level-lifting boat lift introduced to the market.
- 1977** First national network of boat lift dealers offering coast to coast sales and service to boating public. (Now includes five factory-owned regional distribution warehouses.)
- 1980** First boat lifts to offer a multi-valve control center.
- 1985** First free-floating lift for stationary docks with introduction of the Side-Tie™ B-Model HydroHoist®.
- 1992** First L-arm design for greater stability and performance.
- 1996** First boatlift company to offer a ground fault circuit interrupter (user safeguard device) on all its lift controls.
- 1998** First HydroPort™ PWC platform released.
- 2001** First seamless, one-piece, rotationally molded boat lift tank for flawless air retention, strength, and resistance to impact damage, with the introduction of the UltraLift™ line of HydroHoist® Boat Lifts.
- 2001** First to offer “all steel out of the water” with the UltraLift™ and UltraLift2™ boat lift line.
- 2004** First PWC docking platform to offer both wheels and rollers for user-friendly docking and launching with the introduction of the HydroPort2™ PWC platform.
- 2004** First boat lift company to employ a full-time State Certified Professional Engineer to enhance the design, performance, and quality of products.
- 2006** First control center with automated rapid-launch feature and all corrosion- free components.
- 2007** First proprietary remote control with programmable boarding positions.
- 2007** First rotationally molded tanks for -shallow water applications.
- 2008** First in industry to heat-fuse rotationally molded HDPE parts together.
- 2009** HydroHoist purchases world’s largest bi-axial rotational molding machine.
- 2009** Introduction of steel cast pieces for better form, fit, and function at all pivot and stress points, molded HDPE parts together.
- 2010** Introduced B2™ Series with a simple approach for increased speed, stability, and reliability.
- 2011** Release HP2XL™ to handle larger and heavier personal watercrafts.
- 2013** Introduction of Boat Protection Package with the addition of Bow Guide and Corner Bumpers.
- 2014** Introduction of Air Assist line (drive-on, drive-off with the assistance of an air-assisted solar-powered motor)

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