

## Boat catches fire and sinks near Newville

By Jeff Brown  
Reporter staff

A runabout owned by a Janesville man caught fire as it was being launched from the pier at Harbor Recreation Sunday morning, July 14.

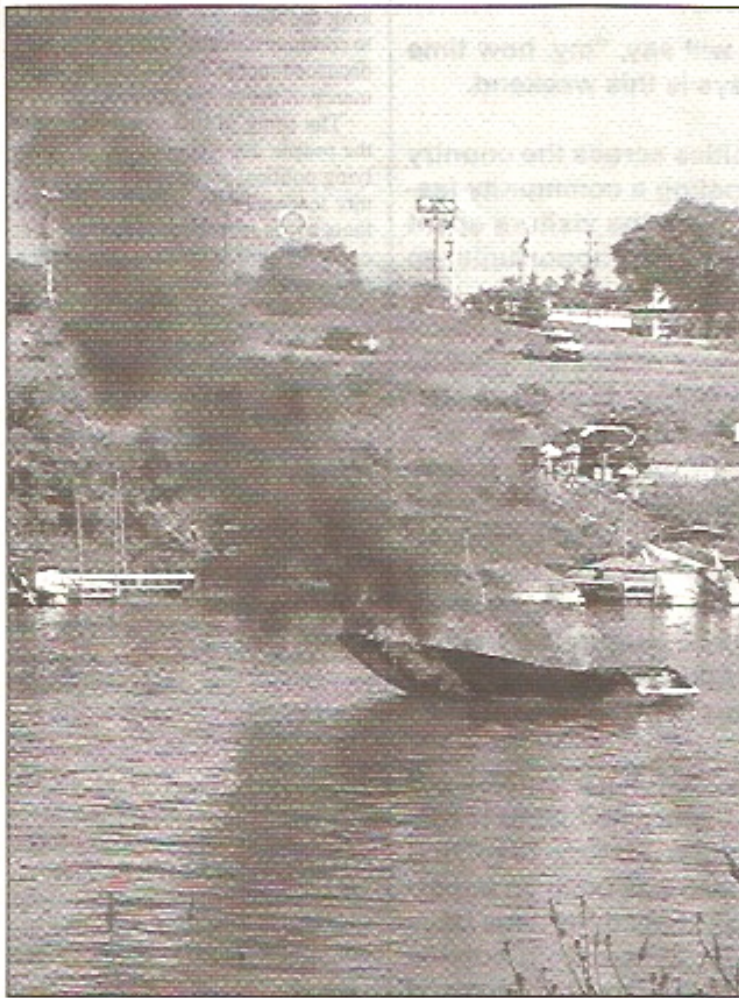
Chuck Schubel was buttoning down his pontoon boat on his sister's pier along Ellendale Road when he heard sirens shortly after 10:00 a.m. He looked up and saw the boat, which had drifted out into the Rock River, floating under the State Highway 59 bridge toward Indianford, flames leaping up from the fiberglass hull.

As he drove into town to get supplies for the afternoon, Schubel saw fire trucks racing toward Newville. Ryan Beckwith, deputy chief with the Edgerton Fire Protection District, said firefighters could only stand at the ready beside their trucks, parked along Ellendale Road along the south side of the river, and watch as the blazing boat twisted slowly in the current, beyond the reach of the truck's hoses. "We don't have a fire boat," said Beckwith, who said the boat was fully engulfed in flames when firefighters arrived on the scene.

Beckwith said that the Jefferson County Sheriff's patrol boat, which responded from the east side of Lake Koshkonong, eventually corralled the boat near the I-39/90 bridge with help from people on a boat from Rock River Marina, and were able to move the boat closer to shore, where firefighters doused the flames as the boat sank beneath the surface and became partially submerged. Beckwith said the Rock River Marina boat towed the boat back to the marina and pulled it out of the water.

Schubel said flames from the boat left scorch marks on the side of the State Highway 59 bridge. "It could have blown up under the bridge," said Schubel. "Thank God it didn't go and hit anybody else's dock and catch their boat on their fire." Beckwith said several people were offered medical treatment at the scene, but declined.

The boat's owner, Link Decker, did not respond to a message sent to his Facebook page, and nobody answered the door at his address when I stopped by Monday afternoon. "I hope he had insurance," said Schubel.



A fiberglass-hulled runabout, engulfed in flames, drifts toward the I-39/90 bridge over the Rock River just west of Newville on Sunday morning, July 14. The boat caught fire as it was being put into the river at Harbor Recreation Marina. Nobody was injured.

(Photo courtesy of Chuck Schubel)