

## ★ OUTDOORS ★



## Fine Time For Fishing (Talk) . . .

By Bob Brister, Outdoor Editor

This is a great time of year to think about fishing. Not necessarily to go, but to think about it.

At least that's how it is at the Coliseum Boat Show, where there are more discussions, arguments, and fishing boat theories per square foot of space than at any sporting goods store in town.

When the weather turns sour, as it undeniably has, boating show crowds seem to improve. The guys who'd otherwise be out plugging Trinity Bay, or bottom-bumping for snapper off Freeport, are standing around swapping theories in the warm and dry environment which seems conducive to the largest catches.

It is possible to learn a great deal by listening at this show, and it is easy to perceive the quiet revolution which has occurred on the Texas Coast . . . from inshore to offshore.

### Shallow-Draft Rigs Evolving

This offshore trend could be offset to some extent, and my prediction is that it will be within the next couple of years, by the growing acceptance of shallow-draft, jet-powered bay fishing boats.

A few years back the so-called "jet" boats hit the headlines and were an instant success across the nation. Then, just about as suddenly, the boom cooled. There were reasons. The early jets had "bugs" in them; some picked up their water (for the water jet propulsion system) from underneath the hull. If these pickup spots became clogged with vegetation or got stuck on mud or shell, the boat was just stuck. And then there other problems, such as price, efficiency, handling, etc. Perhaps the biggest problem was that the boats into which the early jet units were installed, for the most part, were not boats designed for shallow waters.

Well, people get smarter all the time. If you'd like to see a big seaworthy rig which can operate in only a few inches of water and get around at speeds

comparable to those of a propeller driven craft . . . stop by the boat show exhibit of the Harris County Marine Division.

The boat which Captain Grant Iiseng uses in his search and rescue trips (which are often hazardous operations at night, and in very rough and reefy waters) is a Houston-built "Skipjack" designed by Willis Hudson and marketed by several local firms. It is a modified sort of tri-hull job, with a great deal of lift and shallow water adaptation built in. The jet propulsion unit, the most efficient and advanced that I've seen so far, is called the "Rev-Jet" and is in effect an inboard-outdrive with the outdrive unit picking up its jet water from behind the boat . . . thus it can take off from a dead stop in very shallow water with no damage to anything. Boats such as this will undoubtedly catch on more and more among the bay fishermen, provided the problems of pollution, dredging, etc. can be worked out well enough to protect the inland fisheries for enough years to come.