

Elaine Edwards McChristian

The Woman With The Man That Made Seamaster Fly Reels

Ron Gast

We've all heard this idiom before – "Behind every successful man there is a woman." Is it truth or a myth? Sometimes it is the woman that encourages the man to take the risks that are usually necessary for him to become successful. There is also another way to look at this relationship. The woman and the man are compliments to each other making them both successful. Such is the case with Elaine and Robert McChristian.

Like most fishermen and collectors, we have all heard of Seamaster reels. My interest in Seamaster became elevated when I had the opportunity to acquire a collection of them. The person that had them knew the Seamaster inventor Robert L. McChristian, Jr. He and his wife were friends with Mr. & Mrs. McChristian. It was from this person that I learned how much Elaine played in the life of Robert. This got my curiosity up and I had to learn more. This is the story I'd like to tell about Elaine. The following is a chronological record of the life of Elaine and Robert McChristian.

But first, we have to talk about the man Robert Lee McChristian, Jr. He was later known to his friends as Capt. Mack. Robert was born in New York, NY on August 1, 1912. The 1920 Chicago, IL Federal Census shows Robert, his parents and his three brothers living there. The father is listed as being employed as a machinist for an automobile manufacturer. By 1922, the family had moved to Miami, FL. Robert is listed in the August 11, 1922 "The Miami News" newspaper as a member of the Royal Order of Whales swimming team. Robert's love of the water was perhaps a prelude of things to come.

Early in his life, Robert was surely influenced by his father Robert L. McChristian, Sr. The father's obituary says he was a machinist and inventor. He owned the Mack towing company in the late 1920's, was the captain of his own charter boat and originator of the Model Works in the 1930's. In the November 13, 1938 "The Miami News" newspaper is an article about Robert McChristian, Sr.'s business as a patent model manufacturer. Also, in the March 23, 1941 newspaper is an article about his invention of a vending machine that dispenses a single lighted cigarette for one cent. We will later learn that inventiveness would run in the family.

Ideas Are Worth Fortunes, Patent Model Maker Claims

**"If You Can't Condemn
'Em, Give 'Em Trial,
He Advises**

BY JANE DUSENBURY.

(Daily News Staff Writer)

"If you get an idea for an invention, don't stick it in the back of your head," advises R. L. McChristian, patent model manufacturer at 11 N. E. Fifth st. "Even if it seems silly, try to run it down. Condemn it if you can; if you can't, give it a trial."

McChristian says that contrary to popular belief, 90 per cent of the inventors who come to him with plans are not dreamers, but practical people with sound ideas. The other 10 per cent however, have their heads in the clouds and think up countless schemes for perpetual motion, airplanes without wings, and house gadgets which would frighten the most intrepid housekeeper.

Inventors usually are middle-aged, seldom young. They are mechanically minded or electricaly minded, seldom both. If their ideas are shown to be impractical, they admit it and start on something else, claims this model manufacturer.

Many of the devices brought to McChristian by clients become successful. One is a meter spray developed by a government engineer to disinfect the interior of airplanes when they enter foreign countries. This spray allows for measurement of just enough fluid to kill the germs but spare the passengers.

One young lady won a prize with with the ideas for perpetual mo-

her table for invalids; a device whereby the person abed gazes through a magnifying glass at reading matter, dinner, or a manu-curing set on a table some distance away.

A man solved the problem of putting the front and back seats of an automobile together to form a bed. Another invented an automatic light that flashes when the car makes a turn. One man invented a power rabbit for the dog races on which the wheels are part of the engine. There's even a device for launching three life-boats at the same time complete with passengers.

"I've invented an engine which uses nothing but water for fuel," McChristian claims. "If anybody doesn't believe it, just let them come down here and I'll show them. It's a combination of steam, two cycle internal combustion and full type diesel engine. It has no valves, no gears, no carburetor, no spark plugs and carries no compression. Instead of a fly wheel, there is a direct current dynamo which separates atoms of water and makes hydrogen. The hydrogen explodes in the cylinder head and there's absolutely no fuel cost except for lubrication oil. The motor is the size of an Austin engine and develops 100 horse power."

McChristian says he wouldn't invent things himself if it weren't worth while. "Some ideas are pretty wild," he says, "like one man's plan to make a sterilizer for the inside of shoes so people wouldn't get athlete's foot. I won't bother

Inventor Dies Here At 67

Services will be held for Robert L. McChristian, 67, of 3586 NW 41st St. He died at his home yesterday.

Mr. McChristian, an inventor and machinist, came here from Chicago in 1917. He owned the Mack Towing Co. during the building boom here in the late 1920s.

He was the captain of his own charter boat in the 1930s, and originator of the Model Works.

Surviving are three sons, Robert L., of Miami; Col. Joseph A., of Monterey, Calif., and Air Force Lt. Stanley E., of Boise, Ida.

McChristian Sr. Obituary in the September 10, 1955 "The Miami News" Newspaper

In 1944 is the first time we see the relationship between Robert, Jr. and Elaine come to light. On their Application for Marriage License, Bob is shown as being 32 years old and a Passenger Agent for Eastern Airlines in Miami. Elaine is shown as 7 years younger and was born in Havana, Cuba. Both were previously married and divorced.

APPLICATION FOR MARRIAGE LICENSE C. J. NO. 35-403

Name Robert Lee McChristian, Jr Address Miami, Fla.

Age 32 Color white Birthplace New York, N. Y.
Married before... yes Divorced? yes Where? Miami, Fla. Pass. Agent
and

Name Elaine A. Davis Address Miami, Fla.

Age 25 Color white Birthplace Havana, Cuba.
Married before... yes Divorced? yes Where? Miami, Fla. Occupation clerk

STATE OF FLORIDA,

COUNTY OF

Before me, the undersigned authority,
personally appeared

..... and

who being first duly sworn, depose and
say that.... he..... the parent.... of the said..... who is..... years of age, and that..... he.....
do.... hereby consent to the marriage of the
said

to

Subscribed and sworn to before me
this, the day of 19

It is expected that.....

County Judge

Address Ft. Lauderdale, Fla.

will perform the ceremony.

STATE OF FLORIDA.

COUNTY OF BROWARD

Before me, the undersigned authority per-
sonally appeared the persons above named
who, being first duly sworn, depose and say
that the information given by each of them as
above set forth is true and correct, and that
neither of them is married at this time and
that they are not related within the prohibited
degree.Robert Lee McChristian, Jr.Elaine A. Davis

Subscribed and sworn to before me this,

21st day of August, 1944

Boyd Anderson

County Judge

FORM V. S. NO. 48

(TITLE)

(TITLE)

Robert & Elaine's Marriage Application Filed on August 21, 1944

In 1947, Robert started advertising his business as "Capt. Mack's Tackle Shack." In the late 1940's and early 1950's we see Capt. Mack and his wife Elaine become very active in fishing and casting contests.



Capt. Mack's March 23, 1947 Advertisement in "The Miami News" Newspaper



TROPHIES — The array of trophies pictured here will be awarded in the Capt. Mack fishing tournament which runs from July 4 to Labor Day. Only catches on plugcasting, fly-casting or spinning tackle are eligible in the contest.

Capt. Mack's August 21, 1949 Fishing Tournament Announcement in "The Miami News" Newspaper

In 1949, Capt. Mack upped his game by now including his beautiful wife in his advertisements. In the newspaper fishing reports are more and more records of Bob and Elaine's record fish catches. They were also both heavily involved in tournament casting. Their reputations as both great fishers and successful tournament participants began to explode. This was definitely great for business.

SPINNING EQUIPMENT

Miami's Outstanding Spinning Organization

- MITCHELL SPINNING REELS
- CAPT. MACK'S CUSTOM-BUILT RODS
- COMPLETE SELECTION OF LURES

THREE RECORDS HELD ON OUR EQUIPMENT

1 BONEFISH—9-lbs.—12-oz. on 5-lb. line

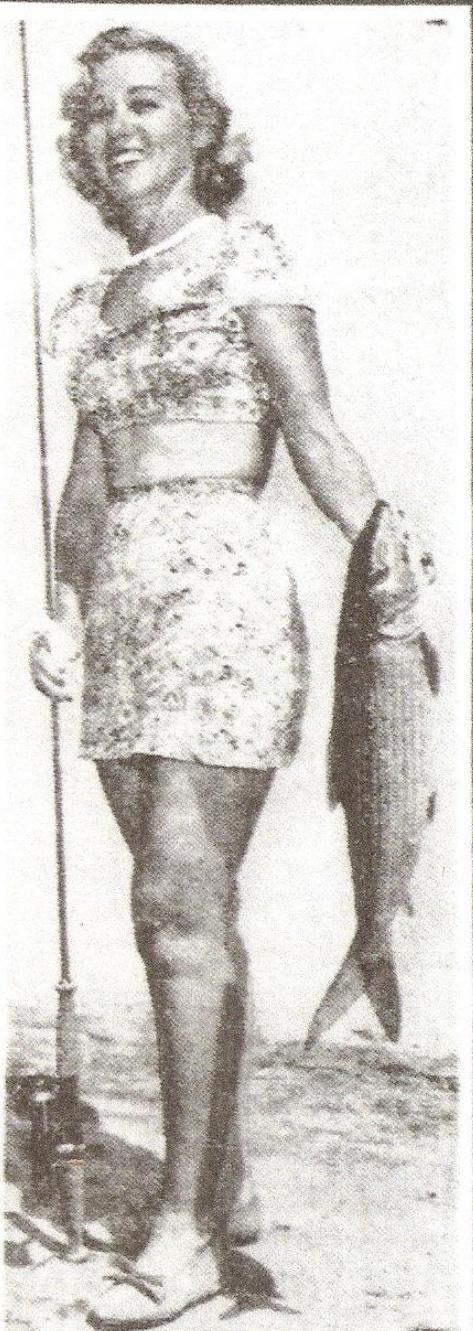
2 BONEFISH—6-lbs.—5-oz. on 2½-lb. line

3 LADIES FIRST BONEFISH—6-lbs.—4-oz. on 5-lb. line
See picture on right
ALL CAUGHT ON ARTIFICIAL LURES

ONLY DEALER IN MIAMI WITH MORE THAN 2 YEARS EXPERIENCE AND OVER 1000 FISH ON SPINNING EQUIPMENT

CAPT. MACK'S TACKLE SHACK

S.W. 12th AVE.
AND CORAL WAY PH. 9-3585



Elaine Featured in October 16, 1949 Advertisement in "The Miami News" Newspaper

BRYAN WINS SKISH MEET

Chicago Caster Takes Title at Miami

MIAMI, July 6—(P)—Clare Bryan, of Chicago, flipped a fishing fly 130 feet across a man-made lake today to win the national skish fly distance contest in the second annual skish tournament.

Bryan averaged 130 feet in three out of five casts. John Dieckman, Paterson, N. J., averaged 127 feet for second position, and Ed Miller, Eustice, Fla., averaged 105 1/3 for third honors.

In the women's division, Joan Salvato, Paterson, N. J., averaged 117 1/3 feet in three out of five casts for first

place. Yesterday she won the women's national fly accuracy competition.

Second in the women's division was Belle Mathers, Miami, with a 63 1/3 average. Beverly Allen, South Bend, Ind., was third at 57 2/3 feet.

Miami youths swept all three places in the junior fly distance contest. Blaine Watkins won at 118 foot average. Chet Mosley was second with 100 feet, and Leo Corti third with 92 1/3.

Barney Berlinger, Philadelphia, averaged 237 2/3 feet in three out of five casts to win the national distance skish bait casting tournament. Bill Hill, Miami, was second at 216 2/3 and Paul Mashburn, Sr., Daytona Beach, third at 213 2/3.

Miami women took all three places in the women's bait distance contest. Joe Becorest won at 166 2/3 average, Dot Hill, 161 2/3 was second, and Mrs. Robert McChristian, third at 149.

Elaine's Tournament Distance Casting Success Reported in July 7, 1950 Article in "The Miami News" Newspaper

SKISH SPINNING DISTANCE (Mens)—

1st (188), Bob McChristian, Miami; 2nd (184 2-3), Clare Bryan, Chicago; 3rd (175 2-3), John Dieckman, Paterson, N.J.; 4th (159 2-3), Norman Theriot, Miami; 5th (152), Eddie Miller; 6th (144 2-3), W. Harvey Jordan, Miami; 7th (143 2-3), Hardy Bryan, St. Petersburg, Fla.; 8th (142), Don Allen, South Bend; 9th (140 1-3), Lou Brinson, Miami; 10th (134 1-3), John Becorest.

SKISH SPINNING DISTANCE (Women)

—1st (162 1-3), Elaine McChristian, Miami; 2nd (146 2-3), Jo Becorest, Miami; 3rd (143 2-3), Joan Salvato, New Haledon, N.J.; 4th (130 1-3), Dot Hill, Miami; 5th (124), Lorraine Pollard, Hialeah; 6th (116 1-3), Mary Bailey, Miami; 7th (116 1-3), Beverly Allen.

Elaine's & Bob's Spinning Tournament Success Reported in July 8, 1950 Article in "The Miami News" Newspaper

Elaine and Bob continued to be active with fishing and casting tournaments. She received a lot of notoriety when she caught an 8 pound Bonefish on 5 pound test line.



S t r i p e d e v i c e s

Miami Woman Fishing Queen

Mrs. Elaine McChristian of Miami has been chosen queen of the fourth annual Florida Keys Summer Fishing tournament. The selection of Mrs. Christian was based on her entry of an eight-pound bonefish taken on spinning tackle with five-pound test line. Mrs. McChristian will preside over the Keys tournament awards night program at the Legion home in Tavernier next Saturday.

Elaine's Fishing Success Reported in September 10, 1950 Article in "The Miami News" Newspaper

SPINNING

Albacore— 3 lbs., 1 oz., Dave Millspaugh, Miami.
Amberjack— 11 lbs., Bob McChristian, Miami.
Barracuda— 35 lbs., 4 oz., Paul E. Clark Miami.
Black Bass— 7 lbs. P. C. Vanderhoek, Miami.
Bluefish— 2 lbs., 9½ oz., Norman Theriot, Miami.
Bonefish— 8 lbs., 5 oz., H. C. Gibson, Palm Beach.
Bonito— 13 lbs. 7 oz., Bob McChristian, Miami.
Channel Bass— 10 lbs., 12 oz., Dave Stouder, Miami.
Cobia— 41 lbs., 8 oz., Vernon Lamp, Miami.
Dolphin— 18 lbs., 14 oz., Bob Sealy, Miami.
Grouper— 7 lbs., 8 oz., Andrew Hatchett, Rock Harbor.
Jack— 10 lbs., 15 oz., Dave Millspaugh, Miami.
Kingfish— 9 lbs., 9 oz., Bob McChristian, Miami.

Bob's Tournament Fishing Success Reported in July 1, 1951 Article in "The Miami News" Newspaper

In the early 1950's is when we see Bob becoming a major supporter of spinning tackle. His love for the spinning reel was often discouraged by the lack of its capability. Catching large fish with a reel will test its capability. Bob would later improve on the spinning reel design.

* * *

Nassau, Bahamas — Spinning tackle will get a workout this week in the Bahamas by Stafford L. Sands, chairman of the Bahamas Development Board, and his guest, Bob McChristian of Miami, aboard the Lapan.

McChristian, who operates Capt. Mack's Tackle Shop, is one of the leading exponents of spinning tackle in Miami. They will fish the waters around the Berry Islands.

* * *

Bob's Spinning Reel Interest Reported in July 12, 1951 Article in "The Miami News" Newspaper

In the late 1950's is when we see Elaine becoming more of a public person at social events. Her and Bob were now well known in the Miami social circles. Elaine began to be seen modeling at various events and promoting the "McChristian" name.

Deck Party Saturday

With all the hustling and bustling around MYC, nautical folks in Miami can be assured the Deck Party next Saturday night will be the most seaworthy sailor's blowout seen in these parts in many a day.

Mary Pollard and Evelyn Lacey who are setting up the affair, claim this will undoubtedly be the biggest party of this and maybe any other boating year.

Some 350 enthusiasts are expected to crowd around the big tent which will be a part of the "Biggest Little Show On Earth" circus theme. Most of the tickets for the shindig are long gone," but a few are left for any fast late comers."

Dinner, dancing, entertainment (ala circus theme) and a huge interclub fashion show will appease the fun seekers.

The big fashion show, which will have everything from bathing suits to evening gowns, is one of the big spots in the show.

The final complete list of models are:

CRYC: Joyce Hearn and Layte Swartsweiter; CGSC: Cynthia Grose and Mrs. Jack Ingle; KBYC; Mrs. James Clary and Mrs. Roger Primm; PHYC; Betty Tarbert, and Rene Jacoby; MOC; Elaine McChristian and Marion Millspaugh; BBYC; Susan Balse and Rene Dixon.

MYC - Gentry Brothers

Elaine's Modeling Reported in September 30, 1956 Article in "The Miami News" Newspaper

While Elaine became more involved with social events, Bob finally had enough of the spinning reels that were available. In the late 1950's, Bob designed his own spinning reel that could withstand the demands of catching large fish. It was reported in "The Miami News" newspaper in 1957 that Bob was now manufacturing his spinning reel design.

This chap, Bob McChristian, calls the spinning reel "the perfect instrument for modern fishing."

He demonstrated his point on our trip by rigging up with a husky, nine - and - half ounce jig that he molds himself. He left off the bucktail entirely. But to the big 10-0 hook he affixed a whole squid.

The first drop with this oversize bait was made in about 150 feet of water straight off the Triumph reef can marker. Before the bait hit bottom he had a heavy strike. The fish moved off swiftly and we cranked up to chase. Whatever it was got off about ten minutes later by simply spitting out the hook.

At one point Bob had out 225 yards of his 15-pound mono line. His oversize reel holds 375 yards and with a larger spool, up to 475 yards. Dissatisfied with the tackle available, Bob designed and now manufactures this handmade custom spinning reel for big-game fishing.

Seamaster Spinning Reel Mentioned in an Article in the May 19, 1957 "The Miami News" Newspaper



The Seamaster Spinning Reel (Photos courtesy of Crossroads Angling Auction)



Photo of Elaine with a Seamaster Spinning Reel

The reel was only available for a short time in the late 1950's because it became too expensive to manufacture. Bob stopped making the spinning reel and started making fly reels designed for the harsh corrosive environment seen by a reel during fishing in salt water. This was the beginning of the "Seamaster" line of salmon, tarpon and marlin reels.

Elaine still continued to be in the news with her record catches.

The Women Whipped Them

When the ladies of the Rod and Reel Club go on a weekend fishing expedition they make it count. Elaine McChristian was the winner and champion mermaid for 1959 with 11 entries for 1,399 points. Virginia Pappas was a close second with 15 entries and 1,257 points. She also nabbed the outstanding catch prize with her 24-pound amberjack on 20-pound line.

Elaine Mentioned in Article in the November 24, 1959 "The Miami News" Newspaper

"The Miami News" newspaper records how Elaine was a member of the Women's Auxiliary to the Miami Outboard Motor Club and entertained at the opening of their new Club House. It was a variety show with members of the Auxiliary entertaining.



CAN THESE GALS CAN CAN?

Mrs. Askins, Mrs. Spinks, Mrs. McChristian



DIG THIS CRAZY GIG (OVERBOARD OR OUTBOARD, WHAT IS IT?
Mrs. G. W. Spinks, Mrs. Robert McChristian, Mrs. Phil Young, Mrs. James Lynn, Mrs. L. P. Askins

Photos of Elaine in the June 2, 1960 "The Miami News" Newspaper

In the 1960's and 1970's, Elaine and Bob eased out of the social limelight. Their new endeavor was the perfection of his fly reel designs. The three features he included were its light weight, its smooth drag and its tough anodized finish required for the salt environment.

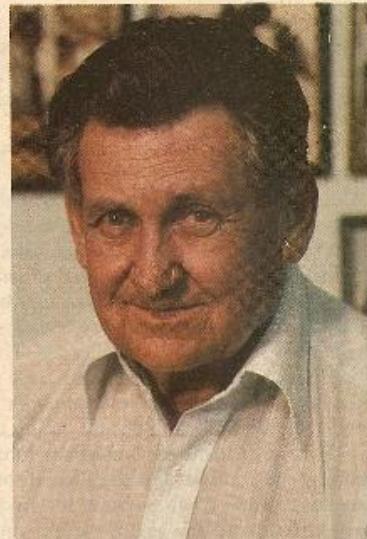
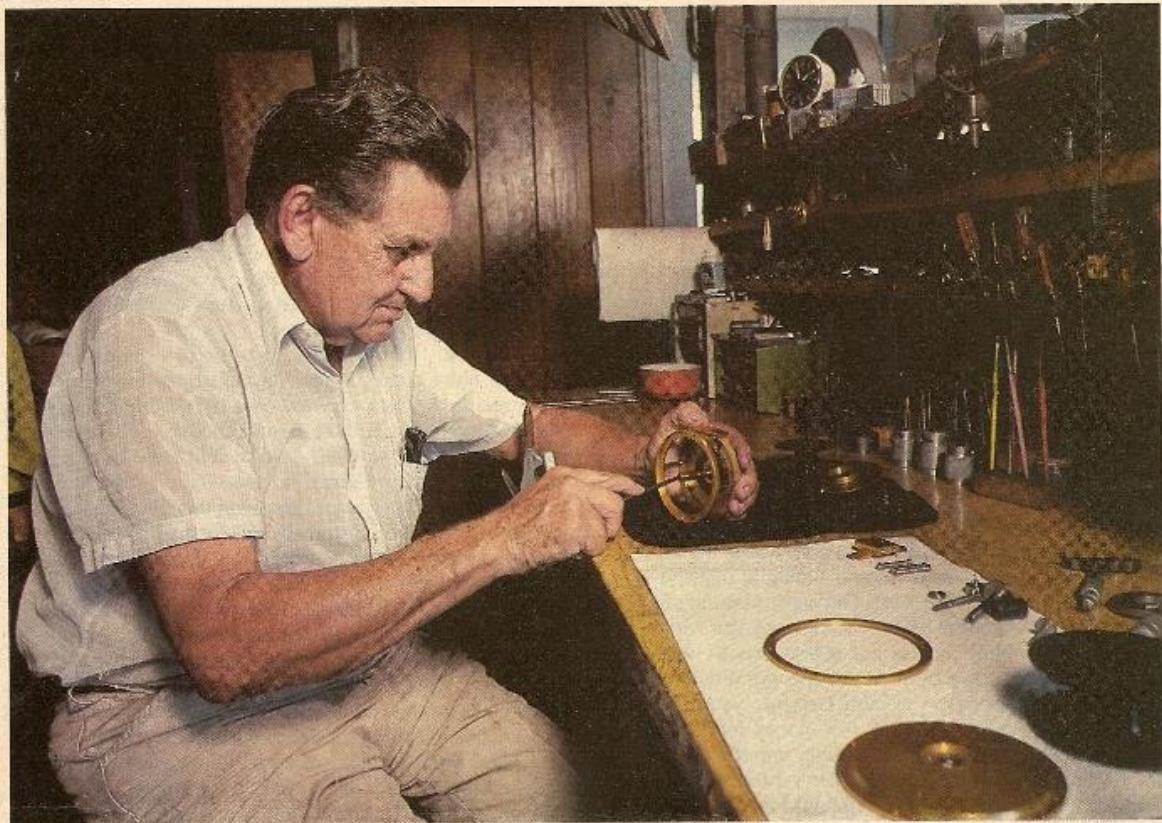
By the 1980's, The Seamaster reel was considered by all fishermen to be the epitome of salt water fly reels. Numerous articles were written about the reel and the man. Nowhere is mentioned the contributions of Elaine to his success. I'm sure she was happy for Bob and enjoyed seeing the praise he received for his reels. Elaine's obituary does list her as the co-founder of the Seamaster fishing reels. Looks like in the end she finally got some recognition.

Elaine Edwards McChristian Obituary



McCHRISTIAN, ELAINE EDWARDS, 99 of Palmetto Bay, passed away peacefully Aug. 2, 2018. Elaine attended Univ. of Miami, worked for Eastern Airlines, was a fashion model, retired after 21 years with Miami-Dade Water & Sewer Authority & co-founded Seamaster fishing reels. Elaine's love for family, friends, fishing & gardening kept her young & vibrant. She won several women's fishing championships & caught a 52.5 lb Wahoo on 8 lb test with a Seamaster reel! She enjoyed memberships: Palmetto Bay Garden Club, Town & Country Garden Club, Laureate Beta Kappa Sorority & was board emeritus of Mangowood Homeowners Association. She was a loving wife to Robert, who predeceased her (1995); devoted mother to: Valerie (Lee) Gailey, Carol (Tom) Clark and Donna Jansen; adored by Charles Frow and grandchildren: Robert W (Dee) Jansen, Robert Gailey, Charyl (David) Morgan, Melissa (Joe)

Luckey, Debbie (Stewart) Magenheimer, Pam (Sakis) Katsoufis, Tom (predeceased) Clark, Kim (Terry) Dunn, Edward (Mercedes) Clark, Denise (Andres) Poggio; great grandchildren: Adam, Tyler & Ryan Luckey; Sara & Billy Magenheimer; Sinan & Korel Cinaroglu; Tommy Dunn; Stephen, Brian & Michael Clark; Andrew & Robert M Jansen & great great granddaughter Lillie Jansen. Funeral service -Monday, Aug. 13-11 AM -St. Andrew's Episcopal Church, 14260 Old Cutler Rd immediately followed by graveside service at Miami Memorial Park 6200 SW 77th Av. Family suggests memorials to [American Cancer Society](#) or St Jude.



Bob McChristian of Coral Gables, Florida, works five days and six nights each week handcrafting the prized Seamaстер reels. Only a few parts are not machined in his shop. Originally the former charterboat skipper designed spinning reels; now he spends his time crafting fly reels.

Photography by Art Carter

JANUARY 1981

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January 1981 Outdoor Life Article Excerpt about Bob McChristian



The Seamaster Fly Reels



More Seamaster reel photos can be seen at <https://luresnreels.com/seamaster.html>