



THE INNOVATOR



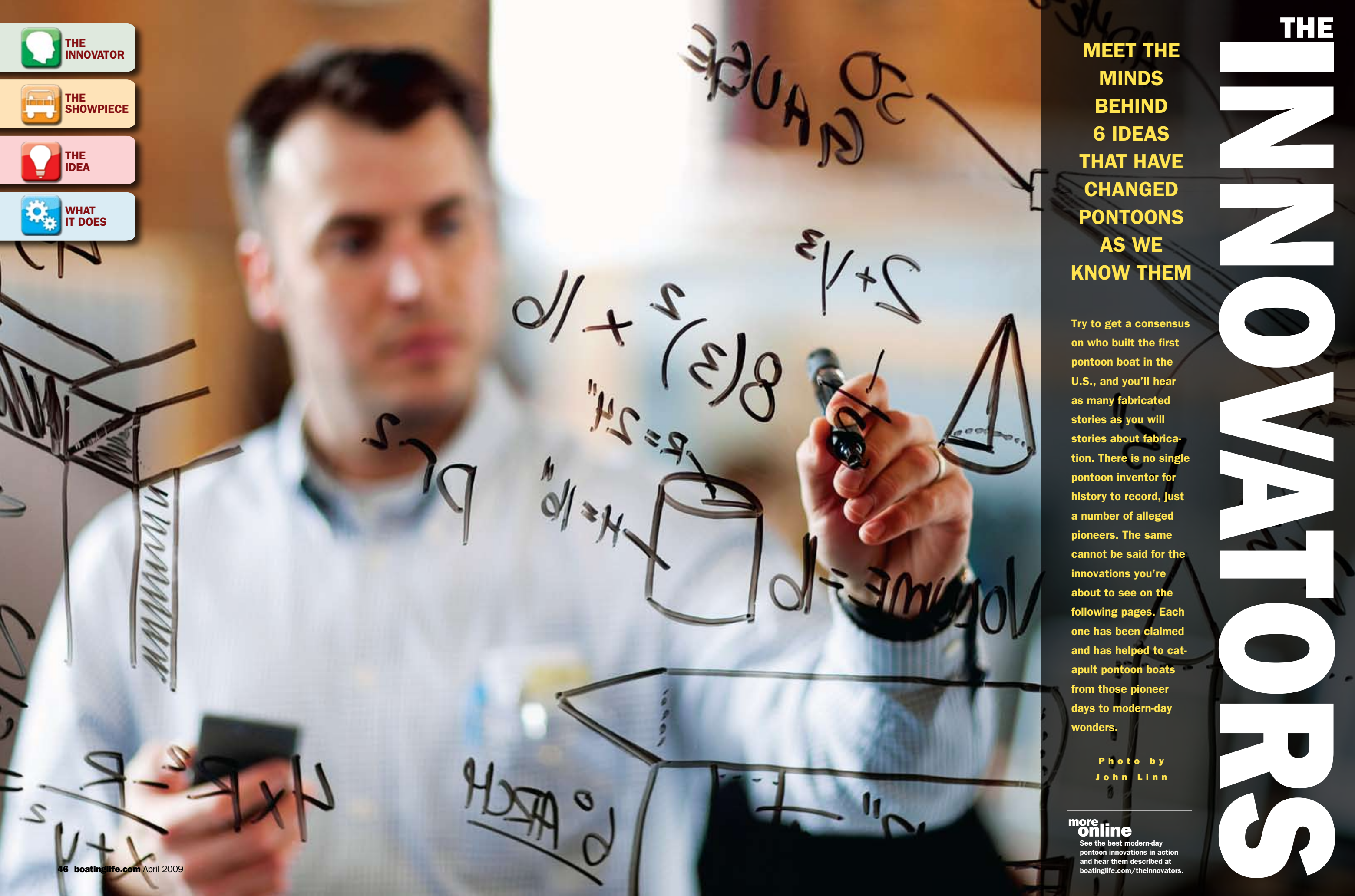
THE SHOWPIECE



THE IDEA



WHAT IT DOES



MEET THE MINDS BEHIND 6 IDEAS THAT HAVE CHANGED PONTOONS AS WE KNOW THEM

Try to get a consensus on who built the first pontoon boat in the U.S., and you'll hear as many fabricated stories as you will stories about fabrication. There is no single pontoon inventor for history to record, just a number of alleged pioneers. The same cannot be said for the innovations you're about to see on the following pages. Each one has been claimed and has helped to catapult pontoon boats from those pioneer days to modern-day wonders.

Photo by John Linn

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See the best modern-day pontoon innovations in action and hear them described at boatinglife.com/theinnovators.

THE INNOVATORS



DAVE CURTIS



MANITOU SHP



A BIGGER MIDDLE TUBE MOUNTED LOWER, AND LIFTING STRAKES ALL AROUND



ALLOWS FOR POWER TURNS OUT OF THE PONTOON NORM

In September 2004, a Manitou 24 Osprey Pro came charging across our test lake in northern Indiana when it did something in front of the dock that came totally out of the blue. Dave Curtis, driving solo, turned the boat 180 degrees, the outside tube came completely off the water, and the boat never slowed down as it charged back the opposite direction.

The whole process had begun five years earlier when Curtis and his engineering team decided to create a pontoon that would handle as aggressively as a V-bottom boat. If they were successful, such a pontoon boat would eliminate the need for an owner to have two boats at the dock.

“It would be easy to take a triple-tube and just throw on horsepower,” says Curtis, “but that wouldn’t complete the puzzle. It had to have sport-boat qualities all the way around.”

Through trial and error, they finally found what worked: A 27-inch middle tube, mounted five inches lower than the outside tubes and lifting strakes on all three tubes. They called it SHP for Sport Handling Package.

“When we tested that first one, it was shock and awe,” says Curtis. “It’s so much more than going fast in a straight line. And it’s allowed us to do a lot of other things to make it a true sport-oriented boat. People to this day come up when we’re running boats and ask what it is. They can’t believe what they’re seeing.” — R.S.

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