



**ERIC HORTON, RANDY EISNER & GARY ALLEN**

AGE: ERIC, 56; RANDY, 48; GARY, 45

COMPANY: PERFECTPASS CONTROL SYSTEMS INC., DARTMOUTH

BUSINESS: SPEED-CONTROL SYSTEMS FOR THE PLEASURE-BOAT INDUSTRY

2005 EOY CATEGORY: TECHNOLOGY

# Cruise control

**Hobby turned business:** "I decided the day job was getting in the way of the hobby," muses Eric Horton about quitting his job as an electrical engineer to co-found PerfectPass. With a penchant for building gadgets, Eisner created the world's first cruise-control system for water-ski boats.

**The endeavour:** "Years ago, what was most controversial at water-ski tournaments was who the driver was," says Randy Eisner, now vice-president of PerfectPass. "You may get behind someone nicknamed Re-ride Ray or Fast Willy. You'd ski well or poorly depending on the driver. PerfectPass levels the playing field." Horton demonstrated his product to Eisner and Gary Allen, a former real estate developer and Canada Games water skier. Both were sold.

**Adrenalin rush:** The trio formed PerfectPass, began selling the product out of their basements, and immediately made an impact in the water-ski world. "Drivers hated us," recalls Eisner. But as world records were set with the PerfectPass system, it became out of fashion to be against it. Today you can't run a sanctioned water-ski competition anywhere in the world without the PerfectPass product.

**Do-or-die moment:** Six years ago a multinational company

made an offer to buy PerfectPass but wouldn't meet the price Horton, Eisner, and Allen were asking. "We were all ready to sell," jokes Allen, "but we probably all would have committed suicide if we had."

**ERIC HORTON**

**Personality type:** Quiet thinker. **Business mentor:** I've learned a lot about running a business from Gary Allen. **Most treasured possession:** The relationship I have with my wife and two children

**GARY ALLEN**

**Defining moment:** The day I met Eric Horton. **Most afraid of:** Getting old. **On progress:** Seeing everyone's standard of living improve. **Best thing about doing business in this region:** Quality of life. I am one who works to live, not lives to work. **The worst:** Geography. We're a long flight from many of our key markets.

**RANDY EISNER**

**Defining moment:** When I lost my job at Ultramar after almost 20 years. You have to learn to live with change and be a risk taker. **First job:** Selling pumpkins on the side of the road at the age of five. **On entrepreneurship:** As soon as kids can learn the value of money, the sooner they'll learn ways to make it on their own.

— Joe Fitzgerald