

2003 Investigator of the Year

To steal a boat, give it a new identity, and then sell it to an unsuspecting boater takes great skill. It took even greater skill as well as patience, knowledge and cooperation to catch the Los Angeles thieves responsible for stealing over a half a million dollars in boats, motors and trailers.

To honor the investigator behind this success story, BoatU.S. Marine Insurance presented Los Angeles Police Department Detective Sgt. Keith Jackson with the International Association of Marine Investigators (IAMI) "Investigator of the Year Award" at a ceremony recently held in Panama City Beach, Florida. As a result of Jackson's efforts, California Department of Motor Vehicles significantly changed its trailer registration process.

The painstaking, 18-month-long investigation began when Jackson looked into a report of stolen boats with false ID numbers. The thieves had used special tools and a quantity of authentic manufacturer stickers, as well as the names and driver's license numbers of actual persons, to disguise and re-register the boats. Vacant homes were used as mailing addresses. But a break in the case came when a data plate firm responsible for the expert ID plate reproduction provided information to Jackson which led to a suspect.

In August 2000 the first of two thieves were arrested. Eventually, after 200 hours of surveillance in cars and planes, cooperation from other Miami investigators and police units, a second arrest was made. Both thieves received felony convictions and were sentenced to state prison. Over 5600,000 in property was successfully recovered.

