

Welcome Back, Lightning

by David Watt

Fifty years after the Lightning made its debut at the 1939 New York Boat Show, two Lightnings returned to the Big Apple and were on display at the Jacob K. Javits Convention Center during the 79th New York International Boat Show, January 12-22, 1989. The opportunity to be a part of the show came at the invitation of the National Marine Manufacturers Association, the sanctioning body for the event.

In recognition of the Lightning 50th Anniversary, and to promote the sport of small boat sailing, the NMMA came to ILCA and requested that Lightning number 1, and a new boat be displayed. Although there was not a lot of time to make all the arrangements, in the true spirit of the Lightning Class, volunteers stepped forward to help make it all happen very smoothly. We had a prime location right in the lobby area of the Javits Center where everyone entering the show, and many people just passing through the building, could stop and see the boats, talk with active Lightning sailors, and pick up literature about the Class.

It is amazing the number of people who have had some contact with Lightnings over the years. Remarks like "My father built one of these when I was a kid", "I grew up sailing Lightnings with my family" and "Boy, do I remember some great times sailing Lightnings" were common from many of the visitors at the display. Everyone was glad to see the Lightnings there and many asked for more information about active fleets in the area.

The Class received a great deal of publicity and hopefully some new members as a result of the display. There were two articles in *The New York Times* and a host of other articles in newspapers in and around the New York area. The opening day, ABC-TV interviewed us at the display and included the spot on the evening news. Subsequent to the show several sailing publications wrote about the Lightning display and VIA, the magazine of the New York-New Jersey Port Authority featured a full color photograph of the display for the cover of their March issue.

At last count there were some sixty inquiries which could be attributed to the Class presence at the New York Boat Show. Each of these received a response from Class Headquarters with additional information about Lightnings and Fleet contacts in the local area.



Later in the Spring, *Small Boat Journal* featured the Lightning in an article about their choice of the ten all-time classic designs. And in September *American Sailor* chose the Lightning for their "Focus on One-Design". The article included a portion on the history and current activities of the class and a page devoted to boat speed and tuning contributed by Greg Fisher.

But as I said at the beginning, all this would not have been possible without the spirit of cooperation which Lightning sailors are known for. I want to acknowledge several who made major contributions to the success of this event. First, to Jack Ryan, who has cared for Number 1 for some twenty years and drove several thousand miles to bring her from Peoria, Illinois to New York and back. Jack also stayed at the display throughout the entire show. Second, to Crit Currie, who volunteered his boat to fill the second spot at the display and didn't even know his boat had gone to the Big Apple until someone called and asked if he was interested in selling it. Crit said "What boat?", and they said the one on display in New York.

And a big thank you to Ron Wulff of the Awosting Yacht Squadron, Fleet 95, who stepped in and organized so many of the New Jersey sailors who manned the display. Ron also provided housing for Jack Ryan and prepared some great Lightning memorabilia for visitors to see. Thanks also to Brad Read, who drove from Newport to spend a day at the show, and to Ched Proctor, who volunteered to pack up and pick up Crit's boat at the close of the show. If you haven't towed a Lightning through the heart of New York, it is something like the jibe mark at Skaneateles, except the other drivers aren't your friends.

Finally, a big thanks to all the Lightning sailors who gave a day of their time to be at the show and help promote the Lightning Class.

The 51st year got off to a great start!!!



Fertilizing The Grass Roots

by Brad Read

One Design Class Racing has its roots in local clubs which get together 10-15 boats for a Saturday afternoon series. One hundred-boat North American championships are not just spontaneously generated out of resin, fiberglass, and sailcloth. How is it that certain classes tend to thrive when others dwindle into oblivion? Local or Fleet activity must be a widespread and dominant part of the class activity. We'll hit some of the main reasons why some fleets thrive while others fail, with great, and not so great, ways to bolster your fleets.

One Designs which dominate their clubs:

Certain clubs get together and decide what boats they will sail next. They hash out which design has all the requirements which they as sailors want in their boats. The Clearwater Yacht Club, for example, held tryouts, and invited representatives from two different one design classes, comparing and contrasting the sailing abilities of the different one designs. The tryout method could work well if and when the decision is made, the group can get a purchase of 5-10 boats right away.

In Montreal, the supply of boats is provided by existing sailors who buy and sell their boats quickly, specifically to increase participation in the fleet. Russ Scrim of the Royal St. Lawrence Yacht Club has used this method to help many young sailors get started by supplying these reasonably priced Lightnings. His effort has bolstered the fleet's numbers and enthusiasm greatly. Tony McBride, who quite possibly has the highest traveling mileage in the class, does the same type of service with his fleet. Funneling the sailors in the clubs toward your class by supplying used boats and sails, increases both the numbers, and the visibility of your fleet.

Some fleets even get militant about their used boats. When I was starting up an Interclub frostbite fleet in Newport, I gave the Rochester Yacht Club I.C. Fleet a call and asked for a list of used boats. I was flatly, (but considerably) rejected on the grounds that the used boats do not get sold outside their fleet. A captive audience, I suppose!

Fleet activity is kept alive by a number of different means. The end which all of us should be striving for is Fun! This utilitarian philosophy should be aimed at both on, and off the water activities. Schedules for fleet activities should be constant. Incorporate the schedules to accommodate as many people as possible. In the fleets I've been racing in, the trend toward week night sailing has been beneficial to just about everyone. My personal opinion is that the "Beer Can Series" racing held on a particular night has become the single most popular sailboat racing format. The benefits to the people involved are enormous. By keeping weekends free, you can keep the people with families active. Those boats which travel frequently are still kept active in the fleet because they can qualify for fleet standings. Those who were afraid to travel before are more apt to go to a weekend regatta and see what this traveling thing is all about. As you switch to the nightly format, you'll find that you will be getting better sailing by more enthused people. A schedule which works for many Beer Can Series is as follows:



5:00 — People start showing up and putting boats in the water. Many people trade off weeks putting boats in the water, i.e. Fred put Sally's boat in last week after he put his own in and it is Sally's turn to put Fred's boat in the water. The warning gun is at 6:20 so most people have left the dock by 6:00. Race Committee, God bless their souls, have **got** to make a point of firing the guns off at 6:20 or whatever time you decide the first race is. People will get lackadaisical if they know the Committee will wait. The best case scenario for the committee is to have a plethora of marks from which to choose a course. This involves getting permission from the local authorities for permanent race marks which are spread out to accommodate prominent breeze directions. If you can make the Race Committee's job manageable from one boat with three people, keeping a regular race committee will be much easier.

6:20 — The race committee is on station with the starting mark set. The course letters are up signifying the course. The race is under way and finishes in 45 minutes. As the fleet finishes, code flag #2 is up signifying a second race. Immediately after the last finisher has finished, the starting sequence for Race #2 is underway. Afterward, people race to the hoist and to the awaiting function.

Function Schedule:

How do you get the people in the fleet to be a more cohesive group? Functions. By good organization and planning, you are able to address a number of different issues with a Race Committee/Function Schedule. Split your fleet up into teams. These two to three boat teams will be responsible for a function every night after sailing. In our fleet there are parties which range from pizza bashes to the "Shore Sails Bowling Night". After racing, everyone meets at the local alley, and by the end of the night some of the rowdier members of the fleet have convinced themselves that the more air time the ball gets down the lane, the more pins you can knock down. Lots of laughs are important for fleet camaraderie.

Your schedule of functions can coincide with Race Committee duty. Allow the group that is in control of the evening's social agenda help out on race committee. Have them at the pin end of the starting line, or run a crash/tow boat. Besides the obvious help that this gives the R.C., it allows them more time before and after racing to get organized. For Lightnings you should have at least two crash-tow boats which are available to use every race day or night. If you are lucky enough to have a permanent race committee, then sit back and observe and let them show you how it's done. Race Committees are the backbone of the fleet. Make their life easier and your racing will be much more organized.

Other fleet functions should include a Winter Awards Dinner and a Spring tune and rigging session. Inviting in a "rock star" can be fun. It gives the group some new ideas and a reason to get together. The Awards Dinner is very important. It gives the fleet something to look forward to during the cold months, and also is a great opportunity to bring new people into the fold. We've incorporated an MVP award to the most improved qualifier from the previous season. By

having a local business sponsor the award, you could make it a fairly big deal. Our J/24 Fleet (I know, those uncomfortable bruise machines that take way too many people to sail) has the Shore Sails MVP Award. The awards dinner is usually provided by one of the local taverns at a very reasonable price. This keeps the cost down for members.

Most Fleets take pride in the regional events which they host. Whether it's the districts or a yearly event such as Oswego's Michelob Classic, fleets should really work hard to put their best foot forward, and succeed. Race Committee should be boosted for these occasions, supplying many tow/crash boats. Functions should be innovative, and all fleets which host regattas should consider a babysitting service. There are certainly a lot of little ones cruising around these regattas.

Run your fleet like you would your company. Every fleet should have a Commodore, Treasurer, Secretary and various other departments to make it run smoothly. Keep in touch with your members through a monthly newsletter. Introduce new members, give standings of boats and sell ads to local businesses. Make them interesting.

There is absolutely no worse crime than driving new fleet members away through intimidation on the water or the land. If a new person who is in the boat for the first race tries to cross when he or she really shouldn't, let him or her go and maybe talk to them a little later. Screaming and yelling at new guys makes the screamer and the screamer both look like jerks. Fleet racing is Fun first, competition second. If we can get the fleet to stay excited, it will continue to expand. The Lightning has a great reputation as a local racer. The builders, sailmakers and sailors are truly lucky to have as great an hierarchy as we do. Keep the grass roots going and we'll have 500 boats at the 60th Anniversary.

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Dwight's Ten Commandments of Fleet Sailing or How One Fleet Grew

by Dwight Gertz

The Squam Lake Lightning Fleet began its 1984 season with three active boats. The 1989 season ended with eleven boats racing and one new boat on order. Most of this growth is undoubtedly the result of just plain good luck. Some of the things we did might be irrelevant or downright wrong for other fleets. But, in a period when so many fleets are wrestling with the problem of fostering growth, the experience at Squam might be instructive. Without the knowledge or consent of my fellow fleet members, I would propose the following ten commandments for fleet growth.

1. *Ban the Rule Book* The rules of sailing are incredibly intimidating to newcomers and are written to deal with the complicated situations which arise when the real pros tangle. To sail the course, have fun, and learn, you need to know port-starboard and windward-leeward. Everything else can be learned later. If you are good enough to know more rules than that you should be good enough to graciously yield to beginners and make it up later in the race with your boatspeed. We have not had a protest in a fleet race in five years and I hope that we never do. Fouls are rare and the friendly atmosphere encourages beginners.

2. *Sail Short, Simple Courses* Once around a triangle is enough distance to separate the winners from the losers. Short races keep the new skippers closer to the action, give everybody lots of second chances, and allow neophyte crews to reorganize between races.

3. *Be Kind to Crews* Get as many interested crews as possible out sailing with the better skippers to see how much fun it can be. The third crew member doesn't really have anything to do so that position can be used to expose people to the sport while letting them gradually do more and more. Five of our skippers spent some time crewing before getting their own boats out racing. Encourage crews to swap around. A really good skipper shouldn't mind showing the ropes to newcomers. Maintain a list of potential crew members and share it with all the owners.

4. *Never Let a Boat Leave the Lake* If a local Lightning owner is selling his boat, try hard to find a buyer who will join the fleet. If none is immediately available, buy the boat yourself and hold it until a buyer materializes. While you are waiting, it will make a great loaner boat for visitors or prospects. You can probably get most of your money back when you sell. One of our "new" boats was kept on the lake this way.

5. *Never Let a Boat Sit Idle* There are good competitive Lightnings sitting in garages and swinging on moorings all over America. Sometimes people just need some help in order to come out sailing. Three of our new members already owned good boats, but needed to be invited to join us. One had bought the boat "cold turkey" and needed a little help getting ready to race, another needed help getting better sails, a third just needed to be asked a few times until he felt ready to say yes.

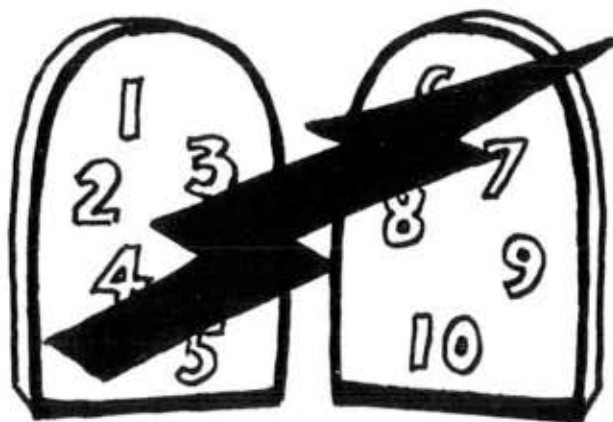
6. *Participation Begins at Home* Participation in racing has to be convenient. Unrigging, rigging, trailering, finding accommodations, taking the whole weekend off, finding crews who can do the same, sailing in unfamiliar waters, dealing with incomprehensible new courses and race committee procedures, and getting in the way of other sailors who are out for blood all add up to more hassle factor than most people can cope with. A sailor should be able to eat lunch at home, drive or walk down to the boat, sail two or three races, and be home in time for cocktails. The regatta circuit offers exciting competition and an enjoyable way of life for a large group of sailors, but a much larger group is willing to sail only if it is easy to do. This may require some tough tradeoffs, but I feel that our fleet has grown because none of us travels during the fleet series.

7. *Anybody Who Sails Is Your Friend* One of our best sources of new skippers and crews has been the sponsorship of handicap races for any kind of sailboat. People get out on the water, they see the Lightning sailors having fun and some of them eventually become crews or boat owners.

8. *Keep It Simple, Cheap and Informal* Good sailors come from an astonishingly wide variety of backgrounds, lifestyles, and economic conditions. Fleet social events should be designed to make everyone feel welcome. We tripled attendance at our annual dinner when we moved it from a restaurant to a pot luck affair at a fleet member's house.

9. *If a Boat Is Sailing, Don't Sweat the Details* If somebody wants to sail with two people or four or wants to leave his outboard hanging on the transom, welcome him/her.

10. *Don't Take Anything Seriously* Absolutely nothing that happens in a fleet race is important enough to get angry about. Foster an environment where every sailor feels that the other sailors are genuinely glad that he showed up that day. Sail over yourself and welcome every other boat personally. In the long run, it is better to sail in a large, happy fleet, than win in a small, nasty fleet.



Fifty Years on Greenwood Lake

by Roy Sengstacken

Charter members of Fleet 95, Awosting Yacht Squadron, in 1939 were Ed Wiley, Otto Ruprecht, and John Baker. I imagine some of them may have traveled up to Skaneateles with AYS guru Feron Moore (or was it Ed Tompkins, another early Commodore type?) to get approval to start a racing fleet on Greenwood Lake. The first three Lightnings had numbers in the nineties.

Awosting already had well organized fleets of Stars and Snipes. By comparison the Lightning neophytes were not exactly sophisticated racers. Mr. Ruprecht even trolled for bass occasionally on downwind legs. Yearbook reports by fleet secretaries over the next seventeen years do not indicate that Otto or, eventually, son-in-law Dave Fitting, ever won a series. Everybody loves to see 99 show up on the starting line.

One time over cocktails Dr. Baker enlisted my mother, Ruth Sengstacken, to crew for him. He had a jolly sense of humor during cocktail hour, but he was a curmudgeon on the boat. Racing was damn serious stuff. Her first mistake was dropping the jib halyard shackle bolt overboard. The man tended to coach in a very strident voice. Mom never went in a race again.

Ed Wiley was Fleet Captain in 1946. The next year son Ted led the Lightning fleet. He won the Commodore and Championship Series and the big Labor Day Race. Ted and sister, Ruth Wiley Post kept *Lively Lady* on the fleet roster through 1957, but they only raced sporadically. Ted finally showed up in the only Finn on Greenwood Lake.

My father, Dr. Royal S. Sr. sailed 124 during the war years. Brother Jack and I had been Snipe sailors only. Home on military leave, I got to skipper 124 once. I was way back, behind Mr. Ruprecht as we started the last windward leg. "Now the trick is," said my father, "you just have to tack a lot." "But I think we are on the right slant," I said. "No matter. See him looking back all the time? Otto gets real nervous," said Pop. So I started tacking all the time. Otto kept covering, but losing ground. Finally he went for a fake tack in the headed direction and we salvaged a small victory, in the middle of the fleet.

By 1946 Fleet 95 had 12 boats, including Capt. A.C. Howell in 700, Ken Macksey in 762, and Horace Sylvester in 827. Four digit boat number owners were Dave Palma, John Rusman, Evan Moore (who later became brother Jack's regular crew), and Dr. Sengstacken. Since I was about to leave for Europe for seven years, I was allowed to skipper a lot that summer. I tell this in order to say that I won eight races in a row and crewed my father to three more before departing. Then brother Jack took the tiller and won the Championship Series. Mr. Sylvester had been scourge of the lake for two or three years. We noticed that when Horace tacked the rest of the fleet seemed to follow behind him.

John Rusman always steered from the low side. Years later this became known as the Ronnie Wulff style. Difference is that John hardly ever upset. In fact, for the next ten or twelve years John was Champ four times and Runner-Up three more. During the same post-war years we began to hear a lot from Chet Howell, spelling his father, the Captain;

also Jack Sengstacken, now sailing 762; and Bill Horton, another former Sniper. They won everything Rusman didn't.

In 1947 Fleet 95 invited five boats from the Hi-Tor Fleet at Sony Point on the Hudson River to a regatta. They brought three man crews and spinnakers. Our isolated Greenwood Lake fleet had always sailed two in a boat and no spinnaker, because of the narrow lake and nearby mountains. I don't know who won or anything, but I heard everybody had fun—they agreed to do it again real soon. However for the next 18 years there were no more regattas and Awosting did not change its local sailing rules.

The saga of Lightning 762: after Ken Macksey and Jack Sengstacken came Elliot Sharp (1955), spouse Dorcas Sharp (1958), Dick Davis (1960), and finally Ron Wulff (1967) for seven more seasons. 762 won the Champoinship for Dick Davis in 1964, plus many series in the early sixties. Dick and 762 starred as the aggrieved parties in a West Milford Township court case after a young woman motorboat driver smashed into the side of the venerable boat near the starting line. "What else could I do?" she asked the judge. "There were sailboats in every direction." Old 762 later carried Ron Wulff to a few Class B championships, dualing with Ole Olsen, primarily.

Bill Horton was Champion four times. In the late fifties he was clearly the ace of Fleet 95, except occasionally when Chet Howell or one of the Sengstacken boys got a foot in the door. We had mixed feelings when Dr. Bill went over to the Star fleet.

In 1956 a high-spirited sailor and occasional bon vivant named Hank Holterhof joined in the fun, sailing the old Sylvester boat, 827. By coincidence there was an infestation of secret weapons on the race course, including cow bells, fog horns, and police whistles. Psychological warfare? Personally, I did not approve of using that stuff, except when I was ahead. Or nearly ahead. I don't recall whether such devices were a factor in winning the championship that year.

The AYS Lightning Fleet had 20 members in 1956 and 1957, the high water mark to date. Additional worthies in that group included Ken Britting, Bill Summerbell, Ben Fortman, Pete Peterson, Charlie Reinauer, Orman Gove, and Dr. Moscarella. (Don't forget their crews, says wife and crew Carolyn.)

On Greenwood Lake in the early sixties the Lightning fleet continued in relative isolation: two person crews, whiskerpoles instead of spinnakers, and all boats wet sailed from moorings. Every winter the serious boats got another coat of copper/bronze bottom paint. And a couple of times a summer an energetic skipper (don't forget the crew) would tip his boat over on the beach and scrub the bottom with some special soap (Fels Naptha?) and Scotchbrite. Most boats were second-hand wooden Lippincotts.

The marathon Labor Day Race in 1962 was reported as a "miserable drifter in which only two skippers endured: Jack and Roy Sengstacken." People were beginning to suspect a case of sibling rivalry, I guess.

More noteworthy new faces in the sixties:

Harry Ash — 1963 champ and talented basement boatbuilder.

Milt Titon — great tennis player.

John Pier — great dentist.

John Winter — great venture capitalist.

Dore Sharp — great fisher lady.

Bill Fass — In the 1969 Labor Day Race he beat all the "A" Fleet hot shots in his wooden 3102, *Sea Duce*. (Bill and Flo were the first non-Awosting resident fleet members. Some isolation!)

Plus all their crews, don't forget.

A crew to remember is Bob Howell. He helped win many trophies for father Chet. In 1965 grandson Bob won the Capt. Howell Trophy for the Post Labor Day Race, with dad Chet crewing.

On the theory that you can't overdo a good thing, we repeated the 1947 Invitational Regatta in 1966. Ten salt water boats came over from the Hi-Tor Fleet in Stony Point. Spinnakers were optional but I don't think any of us tried it. We did run at least one triangle course, along with our regular windward-leeward route. In the key race I got lucky when the visitors' spinnakers blew back in their faces. They got too close to Fox Island. We did not tell them everything about our lake. Walter Tripp of the visitors was second and brother Jack third.

Frank Collins came up from Delaware Bay that year with a new fiberglass boat, and another layer of our isolation peeled away. After he won our Championship Series six of us decided to hell with that. During the off-season we placed a mass order for state-of-the art Lippincotts, including spinnaker rigs.

Somewhere in the same time frame I remember talking briefly to racer and sailmaker Bob Seidleman at the annual

Winter Meeting of the combined Metropolitan and Central Atlantic Districts. Me: "Can a boat be competitive these days without a back stay downhaul?" Seidleman: "No." So I got one of those high tech suckers, too. That lovely mast bender became a great security blanket.

Over the next eight years Jack S. and Roy S. each won four Fleet Championships. Chet Howell and I were each Runner-up three times and Jack twice. I cannot resist adding modestly that Carolyn and I might have done better except that I was out of action with broken bones in 1971. Jack's super year was 1968; he collected a record string of blue pennants, missing only one series all season, and the Captain Howell Race which Chet won.

During the same period, 1967 through 1975, all remaining wooden boats sailed in "B" class. I think both groups started the same time and sailed the same courses, alternating linear and triangle routes. Most boats now carried three people and spinnakers.

More new faces:

Ron Wulff — Who can picture Ron as a new face? He took over 762 and soon led the "B" Fleet, off and on. "Off" means he upset a lot.

Ted Miller — He bought 827 from Dottie Holterhof.

Walter Lane — A good idea man and a nice new boat.

Ole Olsen — Very hard to beat in light air.

Bruce and Martha Hanover — Flashes of brilliance but a very noisy boat.

Nick and Jeanette Santoto — Challenged "B" leaders in 1328, the former Rusman boat.

Bob Stengstacken — Labor Day '72 winner with parents Roy and Carolyn crewing.

In 1970 the Awosting September Series evolved into an annual regatta open to all seven fleets in the Metropolitan

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District. The Wallenpaupack and Mohawk fleets coordinated open regattas on the succeeding weekends. Three years later all three mountain lake regattas became the Short Circuit, sponsored by the Met District. By then we were getting over thirty boats at the Greenwood Lake portion of the Circuit. Meanwhile our fleet was being invited to the three weekend Mid-Hudson Circuit at Nyack, Stony Point and Chelsea. Several boats also went to the District Championships and even to things called The Last Blast, at Stony Point, and the National Sweepstakes, at Monmouth. Very few were gung-ho enough for the real season stretchers at Monmouth: The Long Johns in April, and Fall Has Fell in October.

We got to know some fine people and good sailors, including: from Lake Mohawk, the Bierman, Graham, and Wagner families, John Marks, and Larry Kenny; from Lake Wallenpaupack, John and Joan Rowley, Franz Schneider, Joe Marks, and Henry Fretz; the Monmouth, the Huntsman, Corr, and Schwartz families; from Stony Point, George and Barbara Bitler, Mark Lewis, the Tripps, and Paul Krick; from Nyack, Gary and Joan Hurban, and Tom DeStasio and the *Madam Blue* crew; and from Chelsea, Bill Gordon and a couple of others whose names I was sure not to forget.

I did not forget the piano playing sailor and joker, Stan Moldowsky. At Wallenpaupack Regatta trophy time one year he started a long speech about a repulsive old crinkly tin tray he found that was too smelly to take in the house. Therefore he was awarding it to me for being such a good sport whenever Jack S. beat me. (Or something creative like that.) Next season at the Mohawk awards ceremony I said I had forgotten all about that cruddy tray after tossing it into our back yard pig pen last fall. Until a pig happened to throw it out in disgust a few days ago. And since Carolyn said get rid of it, I now awarded it to Ronnie and Judy Beard as consolation for waiting the longest in the water for the regatta rescue boat. This temporary tradition persisted for several years with no discernable improvement.

In 1976 Fleet 95 re-consolidated the A and B groups, and also did away with the Championship Series. Instead, each skipper's 12 best home club finishes would determine the champion. This was great for anybody who might miss a Championship Series race, but lousy for anybody out there regatta hopping several weekends during the season.

Also in that year Nick Santoro bought brother Jack's 9704, the boat in which Marcy Lippincott scored fourth in the "Worlds" in 1966. Jack and Bob Howell moved to the head of the Sunfish fleet.

Chet Howell won three of the next four Fleet Championships and went out on a high note. Carolyn and I also retired from the Lightning fleet after 1979. We won the last few club races that season but I'll just whisper my real conceit: in the whole decade of inter-club regattas throughout the District no Fleet 95 skipper ever beat us more than once.

Son Bob became primary resident skipper of our 12045, a former Sandy Huntsman and Emil Krahulik boat. Bob also signed up our steady crew, his sister Andrea (not to be forgotten).

1981 was the great year enjoyed by everybody's good friend Ole Olsen. Seven straight wins, two series and the Fleet Championship. Crewing was daughter Nancy O. and brother Jack's daughter, Nancy S. Ole died just before the next racing season started.

Fleet 95's boat roster listed a *Murphy's Law* from 1981 to 1985, but the yearbooks do not mention any sailing activity by owner Dan Murphy. However the 1986 yearbook substitutes the boat name *Cracklin Rose* and welcomes "newcomer Murphy to the fleet." Could this be the slowest start ever recorded in the annals of Lightning racing?

Nick Santoro set a noteworthy record: Fleet Champion five consecutive years before heading South in 1987. Wife Jeanette and daughter Alyce helped keep *Eight Ball* out in front. Bob Sengstacken was right behind the *Eight Ball* all those years, except for Ron Wulff in 1983. Ron's personal best record that particular season was in not upsetting, not even once.

There was some ferment elsewhere in the fleet. Herb Dickert and Jim Cosmas had joined in 1976, followed by Walt Johnson and Lou Van Hoff. Despite much teeth gnashing and high pitched instructions to crews and enemy boats, Herb and Walt and Lou really did their best sailing in the off-seasons, bareboat chartering on distant waters. Jim Cosmas' main accomplishment for years was relieving the Santoro family a couple of times as Fleet Secretary. Then suddenly in 1987 Cosmas won a couple of series and even the Fleet Championship. Another anomaly that same year: Bob's brother John Sengstacken showed up from Connecticut and got second in the Whiskerpole Regatta.

More normal conditions prevailed in '88 and '89 when Ron Wulff and Bob S. alternated as Champ and Runner up. It has also become normal for Rich and Gail Miner from the Mohawk fleet, to dominate Awosting's Whiskerpole extravaganza. The Miners won the last three in a row, taking over the visiting star role from previous frequent victors Bob Graham, Tom Bierman, and Sandy Huntsman.

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Keeping Important Things "Between the Ditches"

by Crit Currie, sailing 11900, Commodore, DSA, '90
"Second Oldest Rat in the Barn"

Traveling up north racing my Lightning in the Masters and the North Americans every summer is not as important as our Memphis Lightning Fleet 274 and Delta Sailing Association. They are experiencing the greatest growth ever, and that's been since 1955. Our paid I.L.C.A. owners almost doubled from last year. Our total number of Lightnings is now pushing 35, just about one for every year.

We all work at it. It's fun — new, unknown, younger players to sail against, rather than the same old bunch you've memorized so well. A good number of our skippers race with only one crew, which gets even more boats in the races. We've got so many "rookies", the more experienced

"regulars" often crew for their own crew. This levels the playing field somewhat and makes it a bit more even. Everyone takes his turn at race committee. We do mail out the standings most every week, thanks to our able Fleet Captain, Bill Baxter, Jr.

We don't do much of anything else but race every Saturday and Sunday at 2 p.m., have a couple of beers, and go home. Most years we have a convivial type party-party so we can see what we all look like cleaned up and not in our sailing clothes.

I'm not sure all of this is the way to produce "blue fleet" sailors, but it does produce loyal, enthusiastic, dues paying Lightning sailors. The following correspondence might illustrate one of the reasons for our success and fun.

Letter from Mr. "X" to Delta Sailing Association:
June 17, 1989
Subject: Club membership

Please cancel my membership for good! By imposing such high rates and expulsion rules on non-racing boats you have made it very clear that I am not wanted. I pretty much felt that way last year anyway.

If I was at "your dock" when the racing boats wanted it, I was told, "Get out of the way!" I guess the motto should be, "If you don't race, don't bother." You sure made a believer out of me. Thank You."

Letter to Mr. "X":
July 6, 1989

Dear Mr. "X",

Our Treasurer passed your membership cancellation on to me. I'm sorry you feel as you do about Delta.

I do not apologize for our single-mindedness about our one-design Olympic style racing. Most informed sailors in the area, in and out of Delta, would agree that our clear and sometimes relentless understanding of our narrow purpose is the reason we are celebrating our fortieth anniversary this year. If we weren't racing, there would be no sailing club at Hernando Point, and no parking at Arkabutla at any price. Of that I am convinced. Our fees for all categories are a bargain.

Your truly,
David Dixon
Commodore
Delta Sailing Association"

And Mr. Dixon is a Thistle sailor!





ACTION
AND SHORE
FACILITIES
AT
DELTA
SAILING
ASSN.
Est. 1949

ARKABUTLA
LAKE
HERNANDO
MISS.
HOME
OF
MEMPHIS
LIGHTNING
FLEET #274
Est. 1955



A Boat + A Lake + Sailors = Fleet 31

by Jack Tibbs

This article is an accumulation of trivia concerning the combination of a boat, a piece of real estate and boating people interacting over the course of some 50 years.

Just over 50 years ago a sailing enthusiast named John Barnes had an idea for a new boat suitable for racing, day sailing and that could be built by a home craftsman. He approached the idea to two young naval architects, Sparkman and Stephens, who designed the boat to his specifications. In the summer of 1938, *Lightning I* was launched at Skaneateles Lake, N.Y. — ingredient #1 was born.

The boat was exhibited at the New York boat show and the Class was organized at that time with a Constitution and Racing Rules. Then, an amateur builder's book was published by *Yachting Magazine* and by the end of 1940 there were 400 registered boats. The class boat was an immediate success and many boats were built at home and by a new company, The Skaneateles Boat Company, located at that lake.

The next ingredient was a chance sighting of a *Lightning* sitting in a boat yard in Detroit by a young sailor from Devil's Lake. Barney Crittenden purchased the boat for \$450 and brought it to Devil's Lake. This *Lightning*, 22, was the first *Lightning* west of Buffalo, N.Y.

The next happening, and this is covered by other articles in this yearbook, involved people coming together to form a club and purchasing the property that is known as Devil's Lake Yacht Club.

With Barney Crittenden and *Lightning 22*, *Arrow III*, as the base, Fleet 31 is formed in 1940 and starts to actively sail in 1941. The other members of the group were Willis Porter, 299, H.G. Kruger, 317, and Bill Girkens, 480.

The class is developing fast in the Midwest and Fleet 31 is chartered in 1941 along with many fleets in Michigan, Ohio, Illinois, and Indiana. The Michigan, Ohio, Indiana district becomes an entity and many of the original hot *Lightning* sailors come from this area.

During the formation years of Fleet 31 the sailors that made the boats go fast were Barney and Jack Beal. The first organized District Championship is sailed in South Haven and Barney in 22 is the winner. The second championship is sailed at DLYC the following year, with Tom Sifert winning the Championship. Limited national competition is held during the war years. (1942,43,44) due to gas rationing. Host clubs provided the boats and they were assigned by drawing lots.

In 1944 DLYC has its first annual "This Ones for Fun" regatta. This regatta, now in the 47th year, is the oldest continuing *Lightning* invitational regatta in the world.

1945 saw an influx of new members and boats. Some of sailors were Howard Rankin, Al Goldsmith, Dave Spitznagle, N. Robrbach, C. DeMerritt, W. Cornelius, and Tom Moine. Jack Beal bought 840 and wins the Fleet Championship.

The first Race Committee Chairman was John Oberst, who passed away suddenly in 1944. The fleet, as a memorial, purchased a trophy that was sailed for each year during the 4th of July holiday. That trophy has now been retired and in 1974 a new trophy, named for Doc Bryner replaced the Oberst Trophy. Doc Bryner was a very active club and fleet

member during the 50's and 60's, and added a zest to all the fleet activities. Other race committees during the early years were Maurice "Pappy" Crowe and Homer Marsh.

Lightning 2183, *Idiot's Delight*, has a 41 year history on Devil's Lake. First owned by Dr. Lowell Blanchard and family, it went through numerous owners and is still sailed on the lake.

1947 was the year of the "Big Blow" during the regatta. This is covered in another article in the book. Also, in this year, Barney presented a trophy to the fleet in memory of his father, C. P. Crittenden, who was an ardent Lark sailor, to be awarded to the Fleet Champion each year.

In 1948 the *Lightning* Class started its Winter Championship at St. Petersburg Yacht Club. This series is still sailed today and participation is sometimes up to 80 boats. Also in this year, Commodore Jack Gould donated a trophy to encourage early participation on Devil's Lake. This trophy is still presented to the winner of the Memorial Day series each year.

1948 brought forth a new young sailor. Bruce Goldsmith was the youngest sailor ever to become the National Nipper Champion. Bruce continued on in his sailing career in the *Lightning*, becoming the North American Champion in 1967, 73, 74 and 75. He also won the "Worlds" in 1969 and again in 1973. Bruce was also victorious in the PanAm games in 1967. He has also been a National Champion in the Rebel and Thistle classes of sailboats.

In 1949, Barney was elected to the post of Michigan District *Lightning* Commodore. A perpetual trophy was donated by DLYC to the Michigan district to be awarded to its District Champion. George Maludy won the Devil's Lake regatta that year.

The year 1950 saw young sailor Dave Spitznagle with crew Phil Joslin and Shirley Joslin winning all the trophies, including our regatta. Dave, with his crew, started in the fleet in 1946 and won championships in 1946, 1949 and 1950.

By 1953 the *Lightning* Class has grown to 220 fleets and 5300 boats. Barney Crittenden was elected Chief Measurer of the *Lightning* Class.

In 1954 Barney became President of the *Lightning* Class. The Michigan, Ohio and Indiana districts were reorganized and Michigan became a district of its own. Keith Whitehouse was the Fleet Champion in 1956, and new members of Fleet 31 included Doc Bryner, Carl Benz and Ken Kennedy.

1958-59 was the start of the Nuoffer years and *Lightning* production from the Beecher Street Boat Works. The first fiberglass *Lightning*, XFG-7, was sailed at Devil's Lake by Bill Girkens. The first "Dock Party" was started by the fleet to finance additions to the dock and Jack Beal was elected to the post of Michigan District Commodore.

By 1960 the fleet had grown to 22 registered boats. Bill Nuoffer and the fleet installed a new flagstaff with a jack staff. This flagstaff has been moved several times, but is still in use by the club.

In 1961 Kathy Kennedy became our first and only woman Fleet Champion. The fleet now has fiberglass boats and some of the wood boat owners are wondering how this could happen. Our new Race Committee is Helen Crittenden and Art Kunkle. The *Lightning* Class sailed its first World

Championship in Connecticut and Tom Allen from the Buffalo Canoe Club was the winner.

The Lightning became an International Class in 1963 with 9000 boats and 370 fleets in Canada, South America and Europe. Fleet 31 purchased a boat to be used as the race committee boat, the beginning of the *Mother Hen*. Barney started his R.C. career. Bill Nuoffer started a fleet newsletter called *Tiller Topics*. Jack Beal was a new ILCA Vice President, and it was also the start of the Sipel years.

1965 was the year of the tornado. Activity was slow getting started that year due to damage to some of the boats and club facilities. Forest Houck, the Club Manager, donated an award to the fleet to be presented to the DLYC skipper with the highest finish in the annual regatta. The first year it was presented to the Benz family, Steve, Bill and Maudy. Barney sold 22 and is now the permanent race committee, a job that he continued until 1983. The cost of a new Lightning with sails is \$3000.

In 1967 there were 31 fleet members. The night race was reactivated as an annual event. George Sipel, Jim Sayre and Jack Beal went to the finals of the Prince of Wales cup which is a match race event. They were defeated by Bill Cox, a well known international sailor. With Bob Morse as General Chairman, DLYC hosted the 1968 Sunfish National Championship. At the annual regatta we had a total of 148 boats, 48 of which were Lightnings.

In 1968 we had a record 155 boats at our regatta, 55 of which were Lightnings.

In 1970 the *Mother Hen* is retired and laid to rest in Hudson. A new pontoon boat is commissioned for Race Committee duty.

By 1971 George Sipel and crew of Jim Sayre and Moose Rigdon have dominated the fleet racing, putting together nine straight Fleet 31 championships.

The domination has ended in 1972 and Merrill Bales wins the Fleet Championship. He sails with great consistency, never finishing less than 3rd all year. Junior Champions that year are Joe Tibbs and John Morse. Jack Beal gets a Purple Heart after being shot in the sail by Barney during the DLYC regatta. DLYC hosted the Sunfish nationals for the second time and Lyn Nuoffer with Beth Tibbs as crew wins the Doubles Championship.

In 1973 the Lightning Class is going through major changes in the mast design. George Sipel comes back and wins the Fleet championship in 1973 and 1974. Sailors from the Tri-state area are coming in droves to our regatta to sail Barney's famous figure eight courses and "all clear" starts. In 1973 DLYC adds another class of sailboats, the 470's. In 1979 the 470 Nationals are held at DLYC with 60 boats participating. The fleet continued racing until the early 80's.

Merrill Bales wins the DLYC regatta in 1974. He is the first winner from Fleet 31 since Jeff Moehl in 1964. In 1976 Merrill Bales is elected Michigan District Commodore. Hank Hodgson is the Fleet Champion.

Hank Hodgson is the new Michigan District Champion in 1977, a first for Devil's Lake since Barney won it in the 40's. This regatta is hosted by Devil's Lake and held at North Cape Yacht Club. Jim Morse is the Junior Michigan District Champion. In 1979 the district retired the District Championship Trophy, dedicating a new trophy to George Sipel. Merrill Bales is the Fleet Champion.

1980 found Hank Hodgson, with crew of Karen Hodgson and Marinus VanOoyen District Champion at Saginaw Bay.

In 1981 Bruce Goldsmith returns to Devil's Lake. He is District Champion. Jim Sayre, Merrill Bales, Jack Tibbs, Bruce Goldsmith are the District Team Race Champions. Merrill is the Fleet 31 Champion.

In 1982 Jack Tibbs is the District Commodore and Vice President of the ILCA. George Sipel, Jr. is the Michigan District Junior Champion. Devil's Lake wins the Michigan Team Race again.

Bruce Goldsmith and George Sipel are Michigan District Champs again in 1983. Bruce is a new ILCA vice president.

In 1984 George Sipel, Jr. is the Junior District Champion, Merrill Bales is the Fleet Champion and Chris Tibbs takes over as Race Committee Chairman.

In 1985 Jack Tibbs is elected Treasurer of the ILCA. The North Americans are at Tawas Bay, MI. Hank Hodgson is the Michigan District Commodore. George Sipel and Bruce Goldsmith are Michigan Champions again.

Beth Tibbs is the Michigan Woman's Champion in 1986 and George Sipel win the Junior Championship for the 5th straight year. Jim Sayre is the Fleet Champion.

There are 24 Lightnings in the fleet in 1987. 14200 boats in the ILCA. Dan Norton is the new Fleet Champion. Hank Hodgson wins the DLYC regatta. The first fleet reunion is held with 80 past and present fleet members in attendance.

In 1988 Lightning Class celebrates it's 50th birthday with a party at Skaneateles Lake, NY, with 227 boats in attendance. Tibbs, Goldsmith and Paullin attended. Pete Paullin wins the Green Fleet. Barney passed away in May of this year. A new trophy case has been donated in his memory. Dan Norton is the Fleet Champion. The Devil's Lake team of Hodgson, Norton and Sipel are #1 at the Team Championship.

Dan Norton, for the 3rd year in a row is the Fleet Champion in 1989. Jack Tibbs is elected President of the ILCA for 1989-1990.

