

## ILCA Family Reunion 2005

Most all of us have been to a family reunion of some sort. It's that event that you kind of dread. The idea of watching Uncle Fester do the traditional "Wambozzo Family Hat Dance" again while Grandma insists she's just having another cup of "medicinal tea", which smells alarmingly like VAT 69 scotch, can be a bit much to swallow. Then it happens. The stories start and you get to sit and listen to the drama and comedy that molded you, your uncle's war stories, the time your cousin lit the cat on fire. The one about how your aunt drove your mom to the hospital in a snowstorm the day you were born, the stories of all the characters and events that made your family a family.

What follows is our version of this year's Lightning Class Family Reunion. Our crack staff of "Flash" reporters have gone through the ILCA archives and interviewed dozens of "family members." From Finland to California, from Buffalo to Chile, we've gathered our family together and asked them to tell their Lightning Family story. Many are serious, world-caliber champions. The rest are like you and me. But their stories all resonate the same idea. Being a Lightning sailor is more than just sailing a Lightning. Being a Lightning sailor is being part of the family.

### The 1940s



#### **John McIntosh—ILCA Life Member**

*Do yourself a favor. Go to Savannah. Sail the Deep South. Why? If for no other reason than to sit next to John McIntosh on one of those overstuffed brown leather couches in the bar at the Savannah Yacht Club and listen. You won't need a drink. A conversation with John is intoxication. Stories about 50 years of Deep South Regattas, Ted Turner, and that the bugs are just in your mind could be a part of the discussion. So, too, could the conversation turn to his sons, and how proud he is of them, and of his family's continued association with the Lightning Class. And, while John is at this reunion, humbly speaking about his life in the Lightning Class, in truth the opposite is true. We are humbled and honored to have John, and his family, as a part of our family.—Brian Hayes, ILCA Secretary*

#### **Please tell us about how you came to be involved with sailing a Lightning.**

Prior to World War II, John, his father, and brothers sailed and competed in a variety of scows throughout the Southeast. The war interrupted his sailing career as many went into the service of their country. After the war, the family was reunited and pursued their sailing with a renewed interest. The once dominant fleets of scow began to die out and John's father purchased a Lightning (number 68). Interest in the Lightning Class soon grew and new fleets across the South started to flourish. John bought his first lightning in 1949, and thus, began his long-term association with the Class.

#### **Who did you sail with? Was your family involved?**

John enjoyed sailing with friends over the years, but also enlisted his wife, Barbara Ann (who crewed for thirty-five years), and his three young sons, Johnny, Neff, and Olin as crew members throughout the years. Eventually, each son acquired their own boats and competed against their father. Each will recall that beating John, Sr was the thrill of a lifetime. It did not happen often, but they felt it was a great accomplishment when it did occur.

## **What venues did you most enjoy?**

When John first bought a Lightning, he enjoyed traveling with friends and family to race in St. Petersburg and Miami. Several years later, he went to Connecticut to purchase a new boat. Following more successes, John went to Buffalo to compete in his first International Lightning Championships. Little did he realize that this would lead to years of sailing local, regional, district, North American and World Championships. John not only competed in Lightning events but had a very successful career in offshore sailing. He competed in the SORC and SAORC series. However, as John will attest, it is hard to choose any one venue over another. Each provides the sailors with a variety of social functions as well as endless opportunities to compete on differing bodies of water.

## **What has the Lightning Class meant to you over your lifetime?**

Outside of his love for family and sailing, competing in the Lightning afforded John the opportunity to build lifetime friendships and acquaintances from around the country, and the world. He can recall his teaching Ted Turner how to race Lightnings, and later competing against John. He can easily remember the races and names like Lippincott, Crane, Eichenlaub, Seidelmann, Fallon, Smyth, Allen, Carson, Goldsmith, Barnes, Swindeman, Mueller, Shore, MacDonald, and others with whom he has shared his passion for sailing over the years.

## **What has been your greatest contribution to the Lightning Class?**

Being an active, participating member of the Class had involved John in almost every aspect of the sport. As his interest grew within the Class, so did his commitment in making the Class stronger. He served in various positions within the organization, eventually becoming President of the Class in 1962. He advanced the drive for the Class to become recognized internationally. With the assistance of Jay Limbaugh, the Class gained international status from the IYRU. Through his association with boat builders, he encouraged Jack Helms of Colombia, South Carolina to begin building Lightnings in the South. Jack was a highly respected boat builder and with John's help, he started producing boats for the Class. This truly helped create a new desire for the Lightning in the South.

Later, as the regattas in Florida became better attended, John, with local help, created the Deep South Regatta in 1957. This year marked the 50th Annual Deep South Regatta, which saw one of its largest fleets in years. From this, with the help of Tom Fallon and others, the Lightning Southern Circuit was born. He served as the Chairman of the Lightning Southern Circuit for twenty-five years and served as regatta Chairman for the 1957 Lightning North Americans at Hilton Head, South Carolina. John's enthusiasm for sailing led him to become a leader in Savannah's efforts in hosting the 1996 Olympic Yachting Competitions. He became a driving force in training the Olympic volunteers which eventually led to the creating of the Savannah Sailing Center.

## **How important to you is the team atmosphere on a Lightning?**

The team aspect of the sport, along with camaraderie formed were the most appealing facets to his Lightning sailing career. The Lightning provided sailors with a great platform on which to build successful and competitive sailing teams. John has a hard time trying to recall his most memorable event, for there were so many. However, it was during the qualifiers during the 1976 North Americans in Sheboygan, Wisconsin that the team concept was truly put to the test. During one of the qualifier events, a strong storm roared down the lake. High winds and steep seas quickly decimated the fleets. Despite the horrid conditions, John and his crew sailed on to the finish, second behind Jim Dressel. Practiced and well-tuned teams, allowed several boats to compete through extreme conditions encountered that day. The seas were littered with broken parts, capsized boats, and sailors trying to weather the blow.

## **Chat about the junior programs you've been involved with and the Lightning Junior NAs. Add your suggestions for developing young Lightning sailors.**

In addition to training young crews on an assortment of craft, he was forever challenging youngsters to compete in many of the US Sailing team championships.

## **What is the strangest thing you ever saw while sailing?**

When competing in the SORC or SAORC, aboard his Morgan 35, he and his crew witnessed a most unusual display by Mother Nature. A string of squall lines developed between the boat offshore and the land in the distance. Over a short period, the crew watched in awe as eight to ten waterspouts developed and danced over the ocean.

*Interview by Olin McIntosh*



## **Bob Crane—ILCA Life Member**

*The ILCA family tradition runs deep. Forget the fact that Bob and his wife, Pat, raised a two-time North American Champ in their son, Jim. Forget that Bob proved to be a great sailor on his own right by winning the 1st Deep South, and was runner-up twice (with Karl Smither) in the Internationals, and once at the NAs (1961). Forget the fact that 60 years into his Lightning career, Bob is still showing up at Lightning Events (like this year's 50th Deep South) to cheer on his formidable stable of Lightning offspring and their offspring. Remember the fact that Bob Crane was there when our Class started, he helped turn the Lightning Class into a lifestyle, and is there watching as the next generations work on emulating him. Bob has a seat at the head of the table at the reunion. Pull up a chair and listen to his story.—Brian Hayes, ILCA Secretary*

### **Please tell us about how you came to be involved with sailing a Lightning.**

I started sailing on Long Island Sound in 1928; first, sailing Wee Scotts, and then, Star boats. In the early 40s, I was involved in flying with Pan American World Airways based at Dinner Key and Miami International Airport. I joined the Coconut Grove Sailing Club (charter member) where they sailed Lightnings. It was a natural choice for me to get involved.

### **Who did you sail with? Was your family involved?**

Early on, my crew was my wife, Pat, and various friends. The kids were too little.

### **What venues did you most enjoy?**

I enjoyed sailing in Savannah, St. Pete, and certainly, in the Miami area.

### **Who was your big competition racing in that era?**

Howard Foht, Charlie Kehoe, John McIntosh, and the Balcom brothers were early and very good competitors.

### **What is the victory you treasure most and why?**

Winning the first Deep South Regatta was always special. Also, finishing second in the North Americans, in San Diego, in 1960, was a thrilling finish. We first met "Johnny Mac" at a district championship, and from then on the friendship and racing challenges were joined. These finishes were special because we were always competing against wonderful friends.

### **What has the Lightning Class meant to you over your lifetime?**

Lots of friendship. Tom and Marie Fallon, Anne and Tom Allen, Stuart Anderson, the Swansons, the Fishers, the Schwartzs; the list is endless.

### **What has been your greatest contribution to the Lightning Class?**

The time that I flew to Helsinki at Tom Fallon's behest to negotiate free shipping for the World Championships. All the boats were shipped from New Jersey free of charge.

### **How important to you is the team atmosphere on a Lightning?**

Good crews are an inherent necessity on a Lightning—and lots of ace crews are good skippers in their own right.

### **Chat about the junior programs you've been involved with and the Lightning Junior NAs. Add your suggestions for developing young Lightning Sailors.**

We were fortunate in Long Island Sound. Years ago, each club had an established Lightning fleet of very competitive sailors. The accompanying junior programs at the clubs also sailed the Lightning as the junior boat. At Norton, my club, this was especially exceptional. The kids on the weekends sailed against the entrenched older group (Bill Cox, Bob Smith, Bob Bavier, me and countless other very capable skippers). The kids ended up sailing seven days a week in all conditions. I shared a boat with my daughter and son, Jim, sailed his favorite of all time #9390, Cat.

### **What is the strangest thing you ever saw while sailing?**

While cruising aboard Holligan, my C&C 35, an atomic submarine surfaced about 100 yards away.

### **What is the best event socially?**

The Midwinters at St. Pete. The old costume parties were such surprising fun.

### **What is the regatta you will never forget?**

My son Jim Crane winning his first NAs in 1972. I threw my powerboat anchor overboard without a secure end and then, dove in with my watch on. I was a nervous wreck.

*Interview by Jim Crane*





## **Finland—Anchor For Our Class in Europe**

*Anchors are strong, quiet, and they deliver when the need arises. In general things are a whole lot more 'grounded' and enjoyable when they're around. Our Finnish District is the same way. Nobody who competed will ever forget the 1995 World Championship in Kupio. Have you ever sailed a practice race that started at Midnight and was televised across a whole continent? Have you ever sailed a race where it was so windy the great Tito Gonzales tipped over? Well, you would have if you'd been there. The Finns volunteer to host Youth World Championships. They travel throughout Europe to help make sure the Fleets are strong and truly representative of our International status. They're represented at the Southern Circuit often where they attend the Midwinter meeting religiously and contribute thoughtfully, because it's the right thing to do. At our little reunion, they are the palest, happiest-to-see-the-sun people in the boat park with the possible exception of members of the Thunder Bay Fleet but their smiles can light up the room. They are tolerant of the sad fact that almost nobody can engage them in Finnish. Finnish sailors are critical to the future of our Class.—Bill Faude, ILCA Past President*

## **Terho Aromaa—Co-Founder Finland District**

### **Please tell us about how you came to be involved with sailing a Lightning.**

I became involved with Lightnings at the same time as my brother, Raimo. Our father, Voitto Aromaa, acquired Lightning drawings and we built a boat in 1948–49, it did not end up a Lightning, the stern was lengthened for a meter and the rudder was built like a Star boat.

### **Who did you sail with? Was your family involved?**

Sailing was a family business from the beginning. At first, I was crew for my brother. Later, I sailed with my younger brother, Markku, and my wife's cousin, Ilpo Hälvä. I bought my third lightning in 1976; the crew was usually two of my three sons, Jari, Mika, and Kimmo. The boys started sailing by themselves in 1990.

### **What venues did you most enjoy?**

The Worlds in Toronto, Buffalo, Chile, Ilhabela, and the Masters in St. Petersburg and Hamilton. Many European and World championships in Greece, Italy and Switzerland from 1957 to 1989.

### **Who was your big competition racing in that era?**

Pentti Puuperä. Very often, when the weather was light I would win and when the wind was strong, Pentti would win.

### **What is the victory you treasure the most and why?**

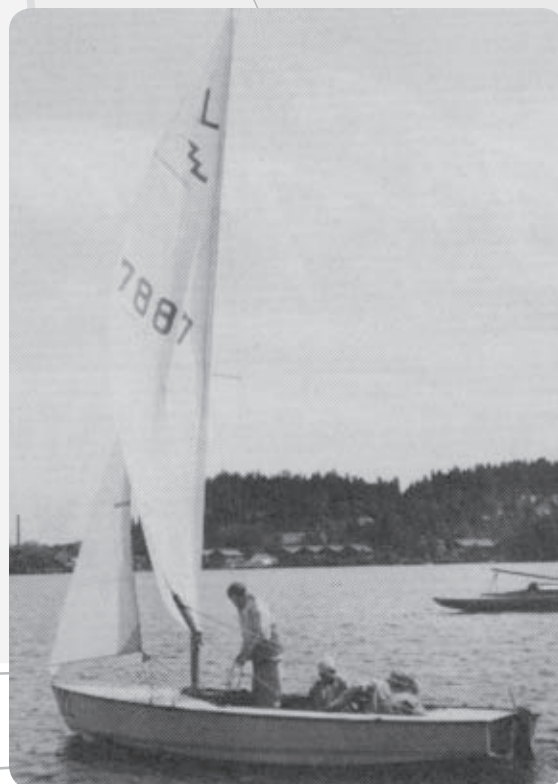
The first Finnish Championship. It was a very close race with a time limit. I had only one minute left, and the next boat was 20 meters and 40 minutes away.

### **What has the Lightning Class meant to you over your lifetime?**

Friends, activities, thrill, and a good excuse to travel around the world.

### **What has been your greatest contribution to the Lightning Class?**

I have been a Certified Measurer from 1957–1984 and District Measurer for over 20 years. I have measured over 100 boats.



## The 1950s



### **Jim Carson—ILCA Life Member, Past President**

*Do you have a question about the ILCA? Who won the 1970 North Americans (or maybe who was 2nd??)? What do our rules say about anchors? If anyone would know these answers off the top of their head, it would be Jim. Add to the fact that Jim has, through his generosity and guidance, brought many junior sailors through the ILCA ranks and helped mold them into champions. Jim has shown through his actions, his love of the Lightning Class; and what he has given can not be expressed in monetary terms. He's the favorite uncle at the reunion that you can count on all the time.—Brian Hayes, ILCA Secretary*

#### **Please tell us about how you came to be involved with sailing a Lightning.**

In the early 40s, I spent summers sailing a Catboat on the Metedeconk River. During that time, I would scratch with a Lightning that also sailed many days. The Lightning was new in those days and neighboring Bay Head was a hotbed of Lightning activity. Lightnings were built by Hubert Johnson in Bay Head and the Internationals were held there during World War II. When I graduated from Kings Point in 1948, it was the boat of choice in the area—50 boats racing in two divisions on Barnegat Bay. Dad bought me my first Lightning (with sails and trailer) for \$900, and I started racing first in Fleet races and then in the Barnegat Bay YRA.

#### **Who did you sail with? Was your family involved?**

I put an ad in the local Post Office that was answered by two kids that had never sailed, Charlie Starkey and George Francis. George has gone on to become successful in the boating business. One of my sisters sometimes day sailed with me, but never raced.

#### **What venues did you most enjoy?**

The first years, my sailing was limited to the Metedeconk River and Barnegat Bay.

#### **Who was your big competition racing in that era?**

Pre-1953, it was John Orelup. We used to call him 'old man Orelup.' He was in his early sixties. My first exposure to national/international competition was the Presidents Cup at Spray Beach YC in 1952. Tom Allen Sr was the winner. We were third.



#### **What is the victory you treasure the most and why?**

There were many victories I treasure, but ones I treasure most were not victories but top finishes in the NAs and Worlds. Tops would be tying Bill Shore for 1st in the 1971 North Americans. That was the year Bill won everything—NAs, Atlantic Coast, Worlds, etc. Bill won the tiebreaker, but under today's scoring, I would have won.

**What has the Lightning Class meant to you over your lifetime?**

The Lightning Class has been a big part of my life. Throughout my working days (33 years with DuPont), I always managed to hit the major regattas and kept a close relationship with the Class, trying to help out where I could. In the late 1970s, dissatisfied with the way Lightnings were rigged, I adopted the trade name Fuzzy Specialties, purchased Lippincott hulls, custom rigging them, and sold them as Fuzzycotts. When the Lippincott Boat Works stopped building Lightnings, I picked up the molds and technology, and over a period of eight years, built 45 Carson Lightnings.

**What has been your greatest contribution to the Lightning Class?**

Work with measurements and rules. It fits in with my engineering background.

**How important to you is the team atmosphere on a Lightning?**

Team atmosphere on the Lightning is paramount. The team must have fun together and enjoy being with each other. I've always treated the team atmosphere as more important than the mechanics and technical savvy on the boat. These are important, but if the skipper and crew aren't compatible, the boat will be a disaster.

**Chat about the juniors programs you've been involved with and the Lightning Junior NAs. Add your suggestions for developing young Lightning sailors.**

This is a subject that I could talk about for hours. In 1975, Dave Ruiter and I started the Advanced Junior Sailing Club at the Metedeconk River Yacht Club. We held try-outs and it was prestigious to be in the Class. The age limit was 15–18; it increased to 19 when the Lightning Class initiated the Junior North Americans and Youth Worlds. The Class met at 6 PM every Thursday evening in the summer. To stay in the Class, attendance was mandatory. We would concentrate on one subject a night with a short prep session and lots of sailing in an older Lightning, affectionately named Club Tub, and Lightnings borrowed from members of Fleet #34, then a critique ashore finishing up around 9:30. The program led to the Club Junior Championship, a day of racing between four crews selected by elimination. Attendance has declined over the years as other activities compete for time. The program is still going but it's changing with the times. This year for the first time we've eliminated try-outs in hopes of attracting more sailors and no longer require 100% attendance. Junior programs over the years have changed and not all for the better. I feel many programs today are too oriented to racing and lacking in the teaching of basic skills. Kids are pushed into racing to the point where the fun goes out of the sport and winning becomes too important. My theory—learn in a more relaxed atmosphere.

**What is the strangest thing you ever saw while sailing?**

There are a lot of times I've seen the spinnaker flown sideways, that in itself is strange. But I think the strangest was when my crew set the spinnaker sideways and we actually passed boats. Strange!

**What is the best event socially?**

I remember some of the early Internationals I attended (before we had North Americans) where the socializing was pretty informal, but lots of fun. Everyone stuck around the Club and participated. Some of the foreign wrap-up banquets have been pretty elaborate—not necessarily 'best'. I'm not much for social activities so probably a poor one to comment.

**What is the regatta you will never forget?**

There are many and for different reasons. My first Internationals (Detroit, 1954); the first Worlds (Milford, 1961); my first overseas Worlds crewing for Marcy Lippincott (Naples, 1965); the two back-to-back second place finishes in the NAs at New Orleans and Milwaukee (1970-71); Ischia in 1983 for the fireworks—don't remember much about the sailing; and there are others including the big waves off Con Con (Chile, 2005). Probably the one with the most memorable moments was Pucon, Chile in 1981. From the ride in an Army 12 seater from Santiago to Pucon with the pilot swatting flies with his road map to the return trip in the Chilean version of Air Force One, an old Eastern Airlines castoff. In between there was the snow capped volcano, launching the boats off the beach, everybody staying in one big old hotel, the bar across from the police station, the pisco sours at the banquet, and the storm that ended what turned out to be the last race because the Chilean Navy refused to go out the next day.





## **George Fisher—ILCA Life Member, Past President**

*George is known to most these days as Greg's and Matt's dad. Of course he's done more for the ILCA than just raising two champion kids (with Marty's help of course!). It is fair to say that the ILCA would not be what it is today without George's leadership and dedication during some trying periods for the Class in the 50s. George is a great sailor, a humble person and a great friend. He's the guy you want to sit next to for dinner at the reunion. Ask him who's better, Greg or Matt, and see why he is such a great attorney as well!!—Brian Hayes, ILCA Secretary*

### **Please tell us about how you came to be involved with sailing a Lightning.**

When I came out of the Navy in 1946, Buckeye Lake had a 15 boat fleet of Lightnings. I crewed my first year and bought my first Lightning in 1947 no. 721. I fell in love with sailing and the Lightning then, and that feeling has never changed through all these years.

### **Who did you sail with? Was your family involved?**

My brother and I sailed together for years and then my wife Marty (she sailed with me at the North Americans at Spray Beach in 1952, and we sailed together on our honeymoon at St. Pete in

1953) until we started having kids. Then my kids became involved big time and we have had a great time together. It wasn't too long before they started sailing their own boats. It also didn't take too long for it to become apparent that my two boys were much better than I was but that was OK—sailing is the best thing that ever came into our family. My daughter was as talented as anybody but she got into horses when she was nine and she was as goofy about riding as the boys were sailing. She has sailed with me in some regattas over the years.

### **What venues did you most enjoy?**

I'm naturally sentimentally attached to Buckeye Lake but there have been so many that I've enjoyed over the years. I got into trouble once saying which my favorite was so I won't do that again. My first big regatta was at the Internationals (that's what we called the North Americans in those days) at Buffalo Canoe Club in 1948. Everyone there was so helpful and did everything they could to help and I sure needed it. But that was my first experience with racing off Buckeye Lake and I was very impressed with all the people involved. That really got me started respecting and appreciating the Lightning Class and the great people in it.

### **Who was your big competition racing?**

We had a very good fleet at the Lake. There were at least eight boats which could win a race at any time so again its hard to single out any one person, and if I do I'm sure I'll leave out someone that I shouldn't.

### **What is the victory you treasure the most and why?**

It has to be when I crewed for one of my sons when the two of them ended 1st and 2nd in the North Americans at the Canoe Club in 1977. They finished one point apart and going into the last weather leg if one dropped a place or the other passed a boat the finish would have been the other way around. Typical father I wish they could have tied but that couldn't happen. But it was a thrill, a memory I'll have forever.

### **What is the regatta you will never forget?**

For me personally I'd have to say winning the Masters in 1998 at the Canoe Club because I think just about everybody from the past were there. I still look at the entry list- I don't think anybody was missing. Several of the guys there had beaten me regularly in their and my 'prime' over the years were there and it was such a neat experience. Was I lucky? Oh yeah!



**What is the best event socially?**

The Class has just been an important part not only of my life but of all of my families. Marty and I have had so many great friends and experiences over the years and I know I can speak for Greg and Matt that the whole Lightning fraternity and the friends they have has meant so much to them. You can't help but wonder what our life would have been without it.

**What has been your greatest contribution to the Lightning Class?**

No one enjoys talking about themselves but to answer this, I know I'm appreciative that I went through the chairs and was president for two years. Personally, I represented the Class and the officers who were exposed personally when they were sued by a builder in the late 50s. We were able to have the case dismissed not necessarily because any skill or ability on my part but an adverse judgment at that time could have been disastrous for the Class.

**How important to you is the team atmosphere on a Lightning?**

Very important and I think that is one of the best selling points of the Class—anybody will help anyone at any time. Think of the articles, seminars, dedication of the Class officers, executive secretary—it's really impressive.

**Chat about the juniors programs you've been involved with and the Lightning Junior NAs. Add your suggestions for developing young Lightning sailors.**

Greg and Matt sailed in the first Junior NAs. We've always had a good junior program at Buckeye Lake and Hoover and I get involved with the instruction. That's a great age to be teaching. I think we ought to get them in our Lightnings any time we can. My granddaughter Martha and I have been sailing more and more together (when I can steal her away from Maegan) and she is just a joy to be with, plus she is good. I have three other grandkids (my daughters three) that are really into Junior Sailing and have been out with me regularly in the Lightning and are going to be good.

**What is the strangest thing you ever saw while sailing?**

The strangest was when I was crewing for Matt at Rehoboth in the NAs the last race. The system wind was over taken by the thermal which meant a 180-degree shift with three times the velocity, which brought the three fleets together at the drop mark. To look at all those spinnakers screaming down was a nightmare. Ask anyone that was there, it was the wildest thing I have ever seen.

**What is the best event socially?**

Same deal, there has been so many of them its dangerous to name one. In the "old days" St. Pete used to put on a costume party that was incomparable. But we always have a good time at any regatta.

**What is the regatta you will never forget?**

Canoe Club—1977!!

*Interview by Brian Hayes, ILCA Secretary*





## **Raimo Aromaa—ILCA Life Member**

*I was born 75 years ago on an island Koivusaari (Birch Island) at Gulf of Finland in the southeastern part of Finland, which Finland lost to Soviet Union (Russia) in the last World War. In the ripe age of two years I caught polio (poliomyelitis), and both my legs were paralyzed from the groin down. Over the next 60 years I walked with crutches, and now I am moving around quite actively with a wheelchair. For the first 30 years of my life my family lived in the Finnish archipelago, so boating and sailing came to be a natural part of our pastime and living. I got my first sailboat, an 18' center-boarder, when I was 12 years old, which was built by my father, who was an officer in the coastal artillery/army.—Raimo Aromaa*

### **Please tell us about how you came to be involved with sailing a Lightning.**

My father obtained drawings of a Lightning in 1949 from a friend, and after we had moved to Suomenlinna, a historical military base fortress islands in Helsinki, we obtained a suitable shed for boat building. In 1950, we started building my first Lightning, #4135. We got the boat measured and started racing in local regattas in 1952. I was at the helm and my father, and younger brother, Terho, were crewing. There my racing career in Lightnings continued for almost 40 years, during which I have owned four Lightnings: 4135, 5544, 7888, 11544. I sold my last Lightning in 1989, then I moved to a keelboat—International 2.4 mR singlehanded, which was more suitable for a disabled yachtsman.

### **Who did you sail with? Was your family involved?**

In Lightnings, several members of our family crewed for me over the years: my father; younger brother, Terho, and his wife, Hannele; Jorma and Marrku; my sister Pirkko, and her husband, Tapio; my nephew, Tero; my nieces, Tina and Tuire; my wife, Kirsti and my son Juha—and many other boys and girls, for whom I have been teaching the art and enjoyment of sailing, racing and crewing.

### **What venues did you most enjoy?**

The only time I have sailed my Lightning outside of Finland was back in 1959 in the European Championships in Anzio, Italy. We enjoyed sailing in the Mediterranean, even if our racing results were not worth mentioning.

### **Who was your big competition racing?**

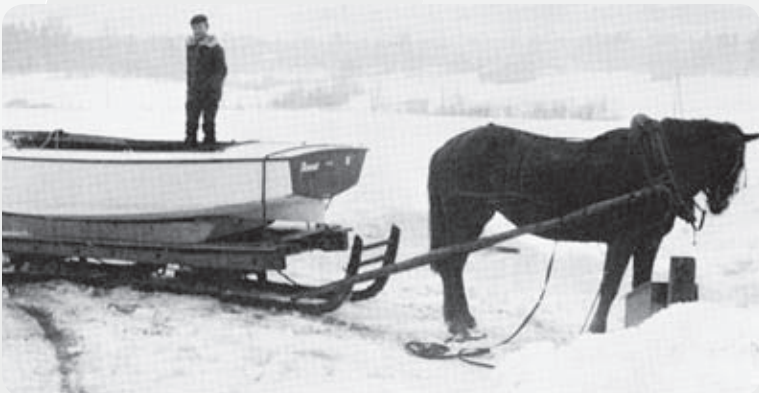
There have been at least three crews, who during the years have been my biggest competition. Every one has won several Finland District Championships—back in the fifties, Eino Ritvas; in fifties and sixties, Raimo-Ragnar Nordström; and after that my brother Terho, who ended his crewing career with me and bought a Lightning—and started beating me in almost every regatta and championship.

### **What is the victory you treasure the most and why?**

The victories I treasure most in my Lightning career have been the two Finland District Championships I won in 1957 and 1958. My crew in these races were my brother, Terho, and in 1957 his fiancée, Hannele, and by 1958, his wife Hannele.

### **What has the Lightning Class meant to you over your lifetime?**

The Lightning Class has meant to me hundreds of good friends and companions, thrills and enjoyment of often even fierce racing, weekend cruises in the beautiful Finnish archipelago, and fond memories of almost a half century of that.



### **What has been your greatest contribution to the Lightning Class?**

I have been for several years the secretary of the Finland District, a Vice President of ILCA, and as a free-lance journalist, I have written some introduction and news of Lightning sailing and activities in some Finnish sailing magazines. I have also been a member of the organizing committees in Lightning Class World Championship in 1971 in Helsinki, in three European Championships in Finland and a jury member of some District Championships.

## The 1960s



### **Tom Allen III— 4-Time World Champion and 8-Time North American Champion**

*Tom Allen Senior was eating a cookie and watching the waves crash ashore at his cottage on Lake Erie when I called to interview him. His voice was gruff, and despite his status in the Lightning Class—he won his first North American Championship in 1954, his eighth in 1970, and was crowned World Champion four times, as well as founding Allen Boatworks—he wasn't eager to start talking about himself on a stormy spring afternoon in May of 2006. He was gracious, but I had the feeling that he didn't understand why we'd want to fuss.*

—Amy Smith Linton

#### **Please tell us about how you came to be involved with sailing a Lightning.**

I started, oh, as a teenager. I was 14, probably. I'd seen people sailing and I thought that was for me. Don't know why. I'd walk up to the club (Buffalo Canoe Club) and hope someone would ask me to go along. When somebody finally did, I turned them down. I was too bashful. Finally, Bob Coleman talked me into it, and I sailed with him until I had my own boat.

I got my first boat in 1951, hull number 4811. Every one of my boats ends in eleven. It's not superstition. I'd just as soon have one with the same number.

#### **What venues did you most enjoy?**

Right at home. Buffalo Canoe Club. Oh, there are lots of places all over the world, but I think for day-in, day-out, right here is as good as any place. The season is a little short, but June til September it's pretty nice. Nothing extreme, just good sailing. Of course, Florida is nice in the winter when it's cold, and the Bahamas are warm all the time.

#### **Who was your big competition racing in that era?**

At that first Worlds in 61 (in Milford, CT), the Argentina sailor who came in second, Jorge Salas-Chavez. I knew him from a regatta in Argentina. He was an older guy. Most of my competitors back then were.

#### **What is the victory you treasure the most and why?**

Oh, I can't say there is really any one. Maybe the first one that I won. I got a boat in 51 and was fifth in the President's Cup (with a sort of comfortable self-deprecation, Senior pronounces it "Peasant's Cup") that year. The next time, I won the President's Cup by 26 points. I was just looking at the yearbook, that is how I know that. The third year, I was 9th (in the Blue fleet), and then I won the next two years.

The first one, you know, you dream about those things.

And I suppose the last thing I won: the Worlds in Switzerland in 1977, that meant a lot. At the North Americans in Sheboygan the year before, it blew hard. It wasn't supposed to, it was supposed to be light. And, I had thought, I have to get myself a tiny crew. Then I thought, gee, maybe they are not quite ready, but why not take my kids? Tommy and Brenda, 16 and 19, and we cleaned up. On the boat, we didn't argue. We got along pretty good, which is unusual with a family. It was pretty good. (As I transcribe Senior's comments, it occurs to me that "pretty good" might translate to 'fantastic' or 'amazing' in someone else's version of English.)

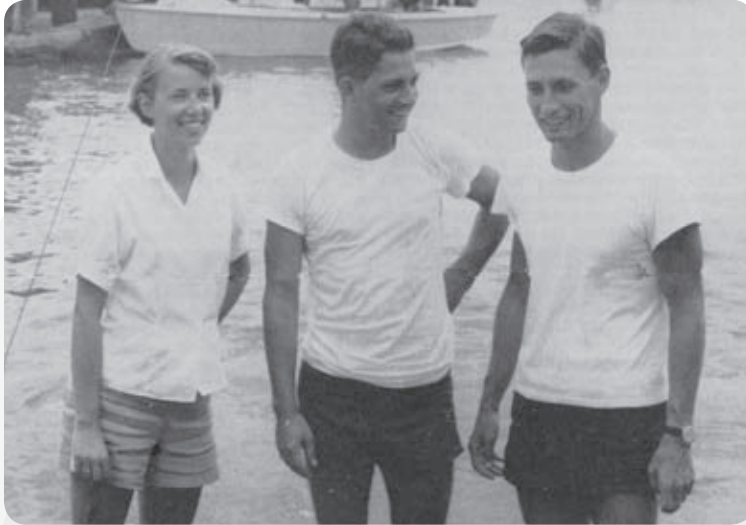
And I suppose some of the international stuff, the Pan Ams. I got first and second at the Pan Ams, and that meant a lot to me.

#### **What has the Lightning Class meant to you over your lifetime?**

Oh Mahgod. Ask me another one. It's, ah, it's something, it's been good for me, the family. It's probably because there are so many variables, it changes and therefore, you are always interested.

#### **If your grandson were sitting around with his grandson, what might they say about you?**

Old codger, why didn't he leave me some money? (Laughter)



**What's exciting to you about the future of the Lightning Class?**

I don't know, I hope it doesn't get too race oriented. I think at least half of the success of the Class is social, and I think it's probably more fun and fits in more socially when the racing is run in pleasant conditions.

I'd like us to focus on tuning and tactics, not just who's the strongest bear or who can hike the longest. If we get too far from that, I think we can hurt the Class: same with if it gets too exotic. If it's all about \$200 tillers and what-not, you're going to lose people. I think we should keep the one-design aspect going and focus on the social side.

**What is the best event socially?**

A day of racing, a cook-out afterwards, that's a pretty good day.

*Interview by Amy Smith Linton*



*Tom & Anne sailing at the Southern Circuit*





### **Anne Allen—1st Woman President—Life member**

*It would not be out of line to call Anne the First Lady of the ILCA. Not only was she our first woman president, Anne is the other (better) half of the Allen team. Of course, Anne had pretty good Lightning family history on her side as the daughter of Lightning great Karl Smither. Anne has been the leader of the ILCA, a championship winning crew and the mother of those four great Lightning sailors.*

*Anne Allen was awarded the Karl Smither award in March of 2006 in St. Petersburg. The award recognizes a lifetime of support to the Lightning Class, encouragement of youth sailing, and Corinthian values. It was fitting—and, of course, deeply touching—that Karl Smither's daughter, Anne, should be the first name on the trophy. Anne has sailed out of Buffalo Canoe Club since the 1940s, competed as crew for her husband, Tom Allen, as well as raising up a family of Lightning champions: Jim, Anne, Brenda, and Tom Junior. She also*

*runs Tuesday night races with some other Lightning doyennes such as Jean Swanson, Carol and Joe Starck. Anne did a stint as the International Lightning Class President, and while she doesn't sail as much these days, she's an active member of the Lightning community. —Amy Smith Linton*

#### **Please tell us about how you came to be involved with sailing a Lightning.**

Through my dad, Karl Smither. His first Lightning was #588. He bought it back in '40 or '41, anyway, when the Class was very new. And he sailed a Lightning until he was too old to keep sailing. That's how we got involved.

My father sailed, he was a president of the Class. My brother was active in the Class before I was. My kids sail, and now my grandchildren are getting involved. We are on the fourth generation of sailing Lightnings, and having my family involved, and being involved for my family had been a wonderful way for us to do things together.

When I was a teenager, another fellow had a boat—my dad had his regular crew and everything, so I didn't always race with him—but this fellow let me skipper his boat. John Leopold had been in the service, came back, and was very nice to let me sail in the junior races. I'd crew for him in the other races. It was a time when the juniors were just getting organized. Tom (Tom Allen, Senior) would crew for Bob Coleman, and then he'd drive Bob's boat in the junior regattas. Tom and I sailed against each other. At that time, I was pretty competitive against him. I beat him sometimes. We were in a whole group of kids. It was fun.

#### **What venues did you most enjoy?**

Well, I guess, Abino Bay, my home port. I traveled a little with my dad, but it wasn't until I married Tom until we traveled far away. I guess the first Worlds when I sailed for Tom, in Peru, and then for the Pan Ams in Brazil, both of which we won. And that was fun. I have really enjoyed the travel to various countries and meeting the people. And, of course, St. Pete is a very nice place, too.

Oh, and the year I was Class president, during the Anniversary Regatta in Skaneateles—perhaps the 50th—they let us in the clubhouse. We had an affair for past presidents in the clubhouse. My father had been very ill, and he gathered his strength to go to the dinner. That was a very emotional regatta for me.

#### **Who was your big competition racing in that era?**

I only skippered really as a junior. Maybe Tom.

As crew, our rivals and very good friends were the Goldsmiths and Jim Dressell. It was always who-beat-who on shore. But I think the fun of camaraderie afterwards is what I really enjoyed.

#### **What is the victory you treasure the most and why?**

Well, I probably have to say the 1st Worlds I sailed with Tom and we won in Peru. And the Pan Ams in Brazil. Our first major regatta was the NAs in New Orleans. We won, but I was just Tom's girlfriend then. I remember a reporter asking Tom what the relationship was, and he said, "Oh, we're friends." It wasn't until later that we got engaged and married.

#### **What has been your greatest contribution to the Lightning Class?**

(Anne giggles like a kid) I don't know! I've enjoyed, you know, being part of the Class, being part of the direction of the Class, it was a thrill to be the President. It was important to me.

#### **What's exciting about the future of the Lightning Class?**

The people. The people you meet all over, from all walks of life. It doesn't matter. We are all equal. We've made some wonderful friends over the years. It's really the people.

*Interview by Amy Smith Linton*



## **Carl Eichenlaub—2-Time North American Champion**

*I still remember the motto from reading the old yearbooks, "Any slob can win with an Eichenlaub." It was one of the coolest marketing slogans from the marine industry I ever saw (second, in my mind, only to the Hard Sails t-shirts from the 70s). Carl's San Diego boatshop churned out lots of winners in the 60s, but probably the biggest winner it produced was Carl himself. Carl's contribution to sailing has been enormous. As US Sailing Olympic boatswain, he has probably produced more success stories in international competition than any US sailor.—Brian Hayes, ILCA Secretary*

### **When did you first start sailing Lightnings?**

I built a Lightning for my dad. He was a pretty good sailor and though he didn't show much interest in it or sail it very much, I started to sail it. I decided to sail it in the districts and I won the districts. Then I decided to take it to New Orleans for the International Championships. I trailed it down there and halfway through the regatta I had won one of the races and made a good showing in the other two. We were planning along in a line squall in the fourth race and my wife missed the hiking strap and went overboard and I couldn't retrieve her because it was so rough. They retrieved her in a spectator boat and that knocked us out of the regatta. It got me all excited to go in there and do well because, had that not happened to us, we'd of made an excellent showing. That got me all fired up to continue racing Lightnings. This was probably three or four months after I had built the Lightning. I don't know we had a real nice boat, nice and fair, and I know I got the centerboard painted at an auto body shop, baked on finish. Everything was really sanitary on it. We did have, in the windy race when my wife went overboard, we definitely had control problems whereas the guys who were used to the Lightning could handle that, and we just didn't handle it very well. I went back for five straight years after that and did a little worse each year. I did two things that got me up to the top. The first thing I did was I built a new boat. I got to talking to a guy that I'd been racing against for those five years, that did about like I did, finishing in the lower half of the fleet. All of a sudden, this guy is finishing in the first five or six boats. So I ask him what he did and he said he had built a new boat. He had played around and built a fast boat. So I did that but then I decided in these last five years I really hadn't sailed very well either. So I started racing Sabots on Mission Bay. I went from being the worst Sabot sailor to winning their National Championship. Then I went to Tawas, Michigan and won the Lightning Championship. I don't know if it was the boat that did it or the hours and hours of practice in the Sabot that did it. That was definitely good therapy to get out in that little boat and just go at it hour after hour. There were always kids out there to tune against and lots of good women.

### **What makes a boat fast?**

You have to have a good boat and a good boat for the conditions you're sailing in. A lot of the time a real good sailor, like Tom Allen for instance, can overcome and can make 'em go, but the rest of us mortals have to work a little harder at it. My way of working a little harder at it was keeping on top of what's fast, but things have changed so much that you can't do that any more because the boats are all glass these days. I think it's like the Star class. They say in the Star class that it took sixty years for them to become one design, it took sixty years to figure out what was fast. I think that has happened to the Lightning Class, so I think any more there aren't any bad boats.

### **What was a funny experience that you had in the Lightning?**

I had a funny thing happen one time in the Worlds in Argentina. They sailed one race where it probably blew over thirty knots. I had two light guys crewing for me and we were sailing a wooden boat. The guy who was really tough in those days was Bruce Goldsmith. He had two gorillas crewing for him. Miraculously, how I don't know, we wound up at the windward mark in first, but barely. So I told my crew if we can fly the spinnaker we'll win the race because we will cover the whole first leg by the time he covers four boat lengths to get to the mark. So they said, "You're out of your mind chief, you're just out of your mind". So we put it up and all three of us were sitting on the back deck, planning along. They said, "You know the jibe mark is coming up pretty fast, what do you reckon we ought to do?" So I said, "I reckon we ought to jibe." So one guy just flinches to go forward and our boat, with the spinnaker up, capsized. This is a wooden boat with no floatation. All three of us hit the board and flipped it back up with the spinnaker in the water. One guy cut the spinnaker halyard. We had water over the seats, it wasn't swamped, and opened both bailers. Within thirty seconds, maybe less, it emptied out the water and, of course, we kept the spinnaker down then. Our trick worked as we got such a lead that nobody was able to grind us down.



You'd think I'd learned from all this but we decided to fly the spinaker on the last leg. We put the thing up and we're going along and it was obvious we were going to have to jibe. So I said, "Well, let's talk about this jibe. We'll figure out how we're going to do it". I allowed as how the biggest danger was losing the mast when the boom came over. So I would pull in about two feet of the mainsheet, and throw the boom over and the minute the boom fetched up I would let the last two feet out to cushion the blow. Well, it worked great. The rig shook and shuttered but it didn't come down. So I said, "Keep your eye on Goldsmith. He's going to have to do the same thing, and it's going to be interesting to see how he does". My crew said, "He's gone." "What do you mean he's gone?", I said. The crew responded, "He's sunk, he's out of sight." I said "No, he couldn't be." Well, it turns out, they couldn't see him because the waves were so high. He didn't

use our trick and the boom come over hit the lower shroud and he lost the mast. So anyway, we did win the race, and that was good to win a heavy weather race like that with a light crew.

**Tell us about your fiberglass Lightning and some of the others you've built. I understand that it was falling apart and you bought it for twenty-five dollars.**

That makes a good story but that wasn't exactly what happened. When I was building a lot of wooden boats, I had a real good series of boats. In one North Americans, I had three in the top five so they were really competitive boats. A doctor had bought a bare hull from me and took it home and parked it in the garage and it sat there for thirty years. He didn't touch it. Well, he was just about on his death bed so I went over and asked him what he was going to do with it and if he would like to sell it. He said he would like to sell it. So I bought it from him but for way more than twenty-five dollars.

I finished it and rigged it, and much to my surprise, it turned out to be very competitive with the most modern boats. Just dynamite fast. So I thought I would like to take it to the North Americans, but I needed to practice a lot. I brought it over to San Diego Yacht Club and at every opportunity I took it out.

I went down one Sunday to race my big boat and the dock master met me at the gate and asked me if I had seen my former Lightning. So that definitely got my attention. What happened is during the night, actually about 2 o'clock in the morning, a water spout had gone through San Diego Yacht Club and sunk a couple boats at the dock and went right through the boat storage area. They found the bow section of a laser stuck in a palm tree across the street to the north and the Lightning had four boats on top of it. I never did find all the pieces of the aluminum mast. Every frame in the boat was broken so I hurriedly patched it up but and it was never right. It's back had been broken and it went from a very fast boat to a complete dog but I went ahead with my plans and took it to the North Americans. I shouldn't have done that because I knew it wasn't competitive and we did very poorly but it was just one of those things.

**And what about the fiberglass boats?**

I knew the North Americans were going to be in Chicago and it was going to be windy. So I changed it a little bit from the series that I had, that I knew was fast. I worked really hard to give it all the waterline length I could and I took it to Chicago and much to my surprise it was the fastest boat there. After three races, I was winning the North Americans but it had a very weak mast and we had an extra mast. My crew urged me to change my mast and I said, "Well, you know, I don't know what's making this boat so damn fast. It could be the mast but I don't want to change. I'll take the risk."

In the fourth race, I got a little gutsy and did a lot of ticky-tacky up around the finish line and we lost the mast. We lost the mast maybe a quarter mile from the finish line, and we figured if we could just finish the race we would probably finish quite high. We stood up the broken section of the mast and put up the main up sideways with the foot up the mast and the leech back to the stern. We were able to sail, but slowly, and every time we would be on port tack a boat would come by on starboard and peel us off. It was the most exasperating thing you can imagine. Anyway, we did finish the race and that was good enough to get us fourth in the North Americans, which is not a terrible showing. Of course, I kick myself to this day for not changing masts. Then again, I was never sure, it was incredibly fast and it was a hand-built, one-off, glass boat. What I did was build a Lightning out of foam and then glassed it. It wasn't an example of my finer work because I was not a glass worker. I can't deny that it was a fast boat. There were a number of boats built in my name, like the Mueller's built a number of boats, and they used my name and what I actually did was I built the tooling so I only really built one fiberglass boat.

*Interview by Dan Gravatt*



## The 1970s



### **Bruce Goldsmith—2-Time World Champion and 4-Time North American Champion**

*Bruce Goldsmith is one of the better known icons of the Lightning Class as well as being one of the Class' more colorful characters and a consummate story teller. A four-time North American and two-time World Champion of the Lightning Class, Bruce's other Lightning Class accomplishments are numerous, including a Pan Am Games Gold Medal. Bruce is also a former Thistle Class National Champion, in his rookie year in the Class. Abby and I have had the pleasure of sailing with Bruce several times during the last few years at Worlds and North American Masters events and while we didn't have the success we would have liked, we certainly had an outstanding time and, as always, I was able to learn a thing or two about boat speed and tactics. Bruce and I spent an hour and a half on the phone doing this interview and telling stories. It would have been better in person over a few cocktails, but even that would be different from the old days; Bruce hasn't had a drink in over a year. —Rob Ruhlman*

#### **Please tell us about how you came to be involved with sailing a Lightning.**

I was working for Murphy & Nye Sail makers out of Chicago. We had moved to Devil's Lake where there was a fleet and I was involved with teaching kids sailing and we just kind of got a Lightning and hit the circuit.

Most people probably don't remember that when I first got out of college I was an engineer for Modine Manufacturing. But after about a year, I decided I really wanted to be involved in the sailing industry. I had been sailing since I was four and had recently won the Thistle Nationals in my first attempt.

I sent letters to ten builders and sail makers looking for a job, and Dick Stearns of Murphy & Nye was the only guy who responded. It was a very small operation at the time and the conventional theory was that you put the young guys on big boats for sales purposes and small boats were for fun. I sort of reversed that role and emphasized the smaller boats—kind of the Greg Fisher of my day.

#### **Who did you sail with? Was your family involved?**

I had been sailing since I was four years old. My family had a cottage at Devil's Lake and a Nipper came with it. There were 100 or so Nippers on Devil's Lake then; it was Dad and four year old Bruce. Dad became a Class champion and then when I was 12, I won with Dad crewing. Of course, everyone figured it was Dad crewing for me that did the trick so the next year we had two boats and we finished 1st and 2nd.

#### **What venues did you most enjoy?**

The Southern Circuit is what I enjoyed the most: the competition, the traveling, the parties—it's just sort of got it all. It's also the right time of year as a sailmaker for the competition.

#### **Who was your big competition racing in that era?**

Tom Allen, Sr. I crewed for Tom and Anne in two Worlds that we won, in '65 and '75, I think.

Jim Dressel was probably my biggest rival in the pre-Fisher era. Gosh, you can't touch Matt Fisher, particularly in the old tight reach days. But Dressel and I saw a lot of each other at various mid-west regattas. I remember one time at Buckeye Lake when it was blowing like 100, you know; there were 40 some boats and Jim and I were a leg ahead. There was a jibe coming up and you just had to fly it. Well, we got this 40 mph puff, and Dressel tipped over, and we didn't so we survived on an error. I think over the years though, Jim got us more than we got him.



*Bruce with Sherry Goldsmith*



## **What is the victory you treasure most and why?**

Well, mostly fun is the key. I don't think there's a time I didn't have fun. I think Hilton Head with all its superheat and the bugs. (for those of us who were there, this is the part of the interview when I'm beginning to wonder if Bruce is putting me on or just losing it!) We had just unreal speed at that event, I was sailing with Paul Adam and Pam (Goldsmith) and we won a couple of races by half a leg. We didn't win the event by a whole lot and had to go from 22nd to 6th on the last beat to beat Bill Shore. Well, we knew we were fast and decided not to shoot corners but to go right up the middle on the shifts. That's exactly what we did and it worked. Speed is very gratifying.

The real story is that Greg Fisher and I had a six-pack-per-race bet going on which was supposed to

be paid off after every race. Well, that didn't happen. Instead, Greg paid off the previous five races on the last day.

On the way out to the race course for the last race, the boat just didn't feel right; the bow felt "heavy". We looked up under the bow and sure enough, there were five six packs up in the front of the bow. Being us we couldn't just pour it overboard so, we drank it, even Pam! Well, three of the five anyway. It was so hot there you never had to pee. We had a horrible start but fortunately the boat was a rocket upwind. It was a stone downwind. Like a Lippincott only more so. That was 12422.

## **What has the Lightning Class meant to you over your lifetime?**

Sailing has been a big part of my life and the Lightning is my favorite. The boat has a little bit of everything and the people in the Class are just terrific.

The boat probably could be made faster.

## **What about personal contributions to the Class?**

Certainly, winning a Gold Medal as a representative of the Class and the U.S.

During my sail making days I contributed to making the boat faster and easier to sail. Innovations like the "deck sweeper" jib. Actually, it was Elton Ballis' design, I just promoted it. I guess my engineering background—lots of people wouldn't imagine that about me, I'm perhaps a bit too haphazard to seem like an engineer—anyway, my engineering background made me quick to jump on innovations that made the boat better. Things like Mark Bryant's innovations with the rig: sloppy forestay, tight shrouds and so on and then we'd build those innovations into the sails. I guess I had an ability to pass these things on to others, like an early Greg Fisher. Gosh, just ask Pam or Sherri about all the times they've gone home while I stayed to explain things at the bar!

## **How important is the team atmosphere on a Lightning?**

Well, the team is very important now but not so much way back when. Guys like myself and Tom Allen would make all the decisions while the crew fed information to us and handled the boat. You can't win without a decent crew, but the old line winners were probably less team oriented than the new wave, and the new wave are probably better; they've raised the bar.

Nowadays, the really good guys have a coach of some sort.

## **Any thoughts about developing young Lightning sailors?**

Nobody competes anymore. Kids don't even water ski, they just get towed around on giant balloons!

Something in the sport that would lead to good steering. We used to go out with a bunch of boats and no marks and just start sailing upwind. When one guy gets behind he just turns and sails elsewhere and everyone follows until the next guy gets behind and then he takes off in a different direction and everyone chases him down. This kind of thing really teaches better boat handling whether in a Light-

ning or a single-hander.

We need to emphasize the fun side of having access to the wind and water.

There is a group of peers in the Class who, well I won't say they don't care about winning, but they're happy just to compete. Who wins is secondary to being able to participate and enjoy the game.

### **What is the strangest thing you ever saw while sailing?**

We had both seen several of the other interviews already and so this led a great deal of laughter over Larry MacDonald's response to this question and several other stories. This one's from earlier days:

Back when Pam was sailing with me I wore glasses. One time in the heat of the moment at a leeward mark rounding Pam was hustling to get the pole back up under the deck and it caught me square in the bridge of my nose. So square, that the end fitting clipped itself to my glasses, removing them from my head and going along for the ride right up under the deck! Well, I was reeling from being clobbered and trying to get my bearings and all I could think to say was, "Pam, when you get a minute could you hand my glasses back to me?" Of course, the whole boat was broken up with laughter after that.

### **What is the best event socially?**

For me, that would be the Oyster Roast in Savannah. There was just something about it that captured the whole spirit of the Class, the experience of the circuit. Every year Karl Smither would eat 100 oysters. That's just as good as it got.

### **What is the regatta you will never forget?**

The Pan Am Games in Winnipeg when we won the Gold. With one race to go, the only way we could lose is to not finish. The last race was forecast to have winds of 40 mph, but not for several hours. Well, by the time we started the first beat it was already blowing 40. We sailed the whole race with just the main; no jib, no chute. These big guys from Brazil won the race, but we won the event with a little "conservative" sailing.

*As you might imagine it's hard to do justice in writing to the way Bruce tells a story in person. Cobbling together this interview from my sketchy notes while simultaneously hearing Bruce's voice in my head was one of the trickier writing jobs I've had. One thing shines through when you hear Bruce speak and that's his love of the sport, the Class and the people who make it what it is. Bruce has sailed with a number of super crews over the years, but he's also been responsible for introducing a lot of beginners to the game and the true spirit of the sport and the Class.*

*Interview by Rob Ruhlman*



*Carl Eichenlaub and Tom Allen III with Southern Circuit Champion Bruce Goldsmith*





## **Carlos "Charlie" Navarro Gasparetto, Peru South American Champion**

*The Lightning Class arrived in Peru in 1959, and among many enthusiastic sailors who gave it life were Jose Barreda Moeller, perhaps one of the most successful Peruvian sailors ever, as well as Carlos Navarro Gasparetto, better known as Charlie. On the same competitive level were Paco Solá Sr. and Santiago Maspons from Ecuador, Isidoro Melero, Manuel Gonzalez Sr. (Manolo and Tito's dad) from Chile, Mario Isola and Oswaldo Bordino from Argentina, Rafael Obregon and Andres Lisocky from Colombia and Mario Buckup from Brazil. I was lucky enough to be foredeck for Jose Barreda for many seasons, sailing against Charlie, with whom there always was a great rivalry. These are the best memories I have from sailing in the 70s and 80s in Peru. Carlos Navarro is a great plastic surgeon, considered one of the best in South America. He was a National Champion many times over and one of the great drivers of the Lightning Class in*

*Peru. He was instrumental in organizing the first World Youth Championships, which was held in Callao, Peru in 1988. The World Youth Permanent Trophy was donated by him and is a tribute to his efforts and bears the name of the Navarro brothers.—Francisco Ayulo, VP Peru—Translation by Paco Sola, Past President ILCA*

### **Please tell us about how you came to be involved with sailing a Lightning.**

I was a member of the Yacht Club Peruano and I found people there who were racing Lightnings starting in 1940.

### **Who did you sail with? Was your family involved?**

I started sailing with my father and a friend. Later on, my wife sailed with me for many years.

### **What venues did you most enjoy?**

Callao, Ancon, and Paracas in Peru. Salinas in Ecuador. Montevideo in Uruguay. Then in Switzerland and St. Petersburg in the USA.

### **Who was your big competition racing in that era?**

Jose Barreda in Peru, Paco Sola in Ecuador, Alberto Migone in Argentina, Horacio Garcia Pastori and Julio Goldie in Uruguay, Tom Allen and Jim Carson in the USA.

### **What has the Lightning Class meant to you over your lifetime?**

It was our primary sport during most of my life and it was a family affair, while my wife and our three children were racing. Towards the end, all of them were beating me.

### **What has been your greatest contribution to the Lightning Class?**

Organizing the first Youth World Championship in Callao (Peru), together with a trophy, 'Hermanos Navarro', it was especially made for that competition, and is still being awarded.

### **How important to you is the team atmosphere on a Lightning?**

Teamwork is essential for racing success and practice makes perfect!

### **Chat about the juniors programs you've been involved with and the Lightning Junior NAs. Add your suggestions for developing young Lightning sailors.**

I strongly believe young people are the future of the sport and that is why I organized the first Youth World Championship in Peru many years ago.

### **What is the strangest thing you ever saw while sailing?**

My boat was virtually lifted out of the water by a big whale while racing in Salinas, Ecuador. It was a terrific experience!

### **What is the best event socially?**

The parties during closing ceremonies when trophies are awarded.

### **What is the regatta you will never forget?**

A regatta in Montevideo (Uruguay), the last race, we started with a 25 mph wind and suddenly, at the middle of the race, it went up to about 40 mph. There were several broken masts and most boats had to abandon the race. Only four boats made it to the finish line and I came in second. It was very difficult to steer the boat and at times, I thought I was not going to make it. It was a 'sink or swim' situation. I will never forget that race.





## **Paco Sola Medina Sr. South American Champion**

*If they'd ask me to define a winner in few words I'd say Paco Solá, a successful man in his personal life and in sports. A great friend and adversary, his competitive spirit made it tough for him to teach, but just sailing against him was incentive enough to excel. He's always been a sailor with natural qualities and instincts, which made him, belong to the elite of champions. He worked for the Class and taught his kids to love the sport. Perhaps his biggest legacy was to have given us in Paco Jr., the first non-North American ILCA President and an unrelenting driver of the Class. With his son Ricardo they won the 1987 South American Championship. Paco was two times South American Champion and four times runner-up, and always stayed on top of the game while he was active. Speaking for all of us who had the honor and pleasure to sail with and against Paco, Cheers!!!—Juan Santos Garcés*

### **Please tell us about how you came to be involved with sailing a Lightning.**

My relationship with the Lightning Class started back in May of 1955, when I was thirteen, which was when the Guayaquil Yacht Club (fleet 272) received the first fleet of 20 boats, manufactured by AF Baay from Holland.

One of those boats, 5872, was purchased by my father who planned to form a team with me and a friend of his. This worked out well for the rest of that year. When the 1956 season started, we continued to sail together but there were so many fights on board that dad decided to give me the Lightning and go on sailing in his ocean racer. It is sad that he made this decision, because fueled by the popularity of the Lightnings, big boat racing eventually died and my dad, a great sailor, left the sport. It was much later in 1974 when he decided to buy a boat and get back in the Class. This was the Farouk, 8513.

### **What venues did you most enjoy?**

Between 1955 and 1957, racing only took place in the Guayas River, on the city of Guayaquil shore, and sailing in it was quite fun. It required lots of knowledge of the river and good sailing skills. Currents can reach 5 knots and winds up to 15–20, so it is easy to imagine the hell that is raised when the current faces the wind. To this, you had to add that, because there are so many sand banks, you literally had rivers inside the river.

Because of the difficult conditions, the Class looked for alternative venues and, in 1958, organized the first South American Championships to be held in Ecuador. The selected site was a salt-water river, also located close to the city, with less current. The river shores are filled with mangroves, which made for lake-sailing conditions, with some current.

### **Who was your big competition racing in that era?**

The champions in those times, and therefore the ones you had to learn from, were the brothers, Enrique and Humberto Plaza, who unfortunately retired from sailing early.

### **What is the victory you treasure the most and why?**

Precisely because of the above, the victory I remember most, even more than the South American Championships, was my first National title in 1959, which was the first time I could beat the Plazas.

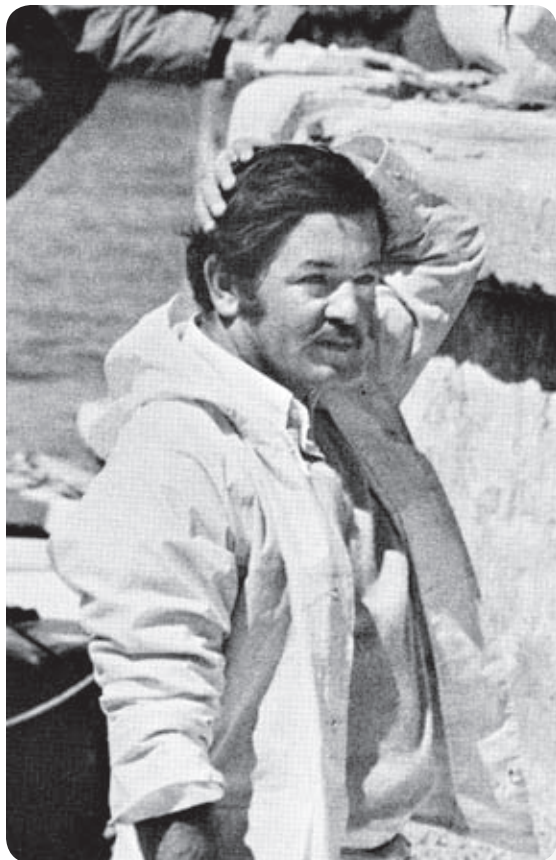
### **What has the Lightning Class meant to you over your lifetime?**

Teaching my kids to sail and be a part of the Class was one of the things that kept me active during the last 41 years. Proof that the Lightning was an important part of my life is that I sailed actively from 1955 to 1996.

I don't think I contributed with anything special other than having helped to continue sailing the South American Championships uninterruptedly. I was also Executive Secretary of the Organizing Committee for the 1975 Worlds held in Salinas.

### **How important to you is the team atmosphere on a Lightning?**

If there wasn't such a level of competition, talented sailors and good friendships in the Class in South America, I wouldn't have been active for so long. I believe that in small countries, like ours, with few and small fleets, it is important to keep competition among neighboring countries so that sailing does not become boring.



**Chat about the junior programs you've been involved with. Add your suggestions for developing young Lightning sailors.**

I have never been involved in organizing regattas for juniors, but I think they are indispensable and they should be promoted much more aggressively than what's currently done.

In Ecuador, I became very involved with the organization of the sailing school at Salinas Yacht Club because I didn't see any other way of feeding new blood into the Lightning Class. I managed to convince the Board to import 30 Optimists to be lent to the members' kids that could not afford to buy one, or who didn't want to buy one until they saw their kids enthusiastic enough. The school was a huge success and it eventually graduated 70 sailors per year.

What is sad is that we didn't choose an intermediate class between the Optimist and Lightning, and so many of the good talents that we found were lost.

The Sunfish was in its time a great alternative, but it was left aside to favor the Laser, which requires bigger bodies and physique, which Optimist sailors don't always have. I still believe that the Sunfish is the best alternative we have if we don't want to bring in a new class. But, if we wanted to, the Club 420 is ideal.

I think one of the best things the Class can do, not being Olympic, is to recognize the great champions it has had, so that a young sailor can be sure that even if he/she is not competing in an Olympic class, they are sailing against the best sailors in the world.

I'm sure it is the spirit which has kept the Class going in South America, especially in my most active years (70s and 80s), when we used to sail against sailors who had been world champions in other classes.

This was the case of Tom Allen, Bruce Goldsmith from the USA (Flying Dutchman, Penguins and Soling), the Schmidt brothers and Mario Buckup from Brazil (Star and Snipe), Jorge Salas from Argentina (Dragon Olympic medalist) among many others. The current equivalent to them is without a doubt Tito Gonzalez from Chile, old friend and fierce rival who has dedicated more time to the Lightning Class than any other sailor I have ever met.

**What is the regatta you will never forget?**

I guess the regattas a sailor remembers most are those they had won. In my case, the two I remember most are the ones I lost. The first one, the final race of the South Americans in Tomine, Colombia in 1980, after having been OCSed and started last, several hundred meters behind the fleet, we were able to recover to a few meters from the winner of that race and from our rivals, a spectacular third place that was only good enough to tie us for first place in the regatta, which we eventually lost when the tiebreaking rules were applied.

The second loss was in Salinas in the race of the South American Championships of 1996. When the race was started, we were the only boat with any possibility of beating Tito Gonzalez, if we finished first and he finished third or worse. Tito knew this well so he pretty much covered us right after leaving the docks, leading us to the wrong side of the starting line and, of course, trying to keep us in the last places, which he could afford because this was his discard race.

Almost at the end of the first leg, we were able to break free and started sailing our own race, and we were able to come back from 21st to second, right behind Miguel Plaza Jr., who won the race. It was an amazing comeback but even though Tito could only come back to 9th, our second was only good for us to be runner-ups.

Since then, I have sailed only a few times, but I always remember the good friends I made and the great times I had in the Lightning Class.

*Interview & translation by Paco Sola Jr.*