

OFF SOUNDINGS CLUB

OFFICE OF
COMMODORE
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February 7, 2004

Dear Off Soundings Club Member,

After the coldest January in many years, with the recent rain and thaw the ground is once again visible. It now actually seems possible that winter may lose its icy grip to spring in another month or so. Some of you are taking advantage of the brief thaw to check under the cover and possibly get started on some of those boat projects – or at least tighten the poppets an extra turn before the next winter gale.

I would like to take this opportunity to wish you the very best in sailing for the season ahead, and fill you in on some of the discussions that have kept the Board of Governors occupied in recent meetings. First, however, I would like to recap briefly one of the highlights in 2003. The Off Soundings Club was awarded the **ECSA Stu Silvestri Trophy for best race management** in a 2003 offshore race for the Saturday Race on Gardiners Bay in the Fall Series. The credit goes very deservedly to Race Committee Chairman Chuck Chorlton and his crew, as well as to Henry duPont – who once again generously provided Nor'easter as Race Committee boat. Lesser yachts would have had difficulty remaining on station for the conditions at the start of the day's racing. Both Spring and Fall Series provided plenty of breeze – as well as sunshine – for the best possible sailing of the year.

Club Secretary Norm Peck came up with a new format for the Yearbook in 2003. Race Secretary Steve Purdy has done a great job in the several aspects of race administration, adapting the various databases to flexible software formats. He has also come up with the new (also "Eldridgesized") format for the First and Final Notices. These changes have been well received, and will continue for the upcoming season.

We will once again be sailing to **Block Island from Watch Hill in the spring**, with the **Fall Series continuing from New London to Greenport and Gardiners Bay**. Other options have been discussed, but the vast majority of the membership desires to continue with this traditional format. There has been some concern raised regarding accommodations at both locations, and the best advice to be given is to make reservations as early as possible. Some of the membership has already done so. Our rendezvous in Greenport will once again be at Townsend's Inn. Greenport's new municipal transient marina (near the carousel between Claudio's and the Shelter Island Ferry) will not have its floating docks in until 2005. I understand there will be some new fixed docks available there this season, which should help the crunch for room inside Stirling Basin.

As some of the membership is aware, Greenport is hosting a "Harbor Days" festival that will start on Saturday evening of the fall series. Since the "draw" for this festival is primarily Suffolk County, Long Island, any impact for the Off Soundings fleet is expected to be largely felt at restaurants on Saturday evening following the awards party. Advance dinner reservations for Saturday may be advisable. In future years, if this festival grows to become a regional draw or starts earlier in the weekend, the Board will reassess the situation. For now, however, the Board feels that there is no conflict. Incidentally, for those Club members who have the time and interest to check in on festival activity, "Harbor Days" provides a reason to stay in the Shelter Island Sound / Peconic Bays area for a while to enjoy a wonderful spot for fall cruising. New London's "Boats, Books and Brushes" festival is a potentially similar draw to New London Harbor for the weekend prior to the Fall Series.

An Off Soundings Club **Winter Luncheon** will be held in Groton on Thursday, **March 4** at Seahorse on the Thames (12 Noon). Save the date! Past Commodore Frank Bohlen has organized this luncheon at a fine harborfront eatery. Cost will be \$15, with a cash bar. The lunch is great way to discuss sailing and Off Soundings items of interest, as well as interest potential new members to the Club. For reservations, please contact Frank Bohlen at (860) 405-9176.

Speaking on membership, the Board of Governors has instituted a new membership recognition program, that recognizes **longevity of membership** in the club. Starting this year, all members with **30+ years** of membership will receive a burgee lapel pin with a "30 year membership" identifier. Among that group, we have more than a dozen **50+ year** members, who will receive a handsome engraved plaque. Starting this year, these awards will be handed out at the Annual Meeting Dinner. Of very special note is member Bill Dodge of Mystic, who has been an Off Soundings Club member for 66 years!! Future yearbooks will note these long-term members, with a special page for the "50+" year members who have witnessed and been a part of a half century of Off Soundings sailing and frivolity.

Speaking of the Off Soundings Club **Annual Meeting**, make plans now to attend on **Saturday, April 3, 2004** at Mystic Seaport's Seamen's Inne. All members (and their guests) are welcome. There will be a special "behind the scenes" tour of the Seaport prior to the meeting and cocktail hour. Due to popular demand, this year's dinner will include a roast beef menu option! Those receiving season trophies are especially encouraged to attend. Winning skippers unable to attend should designate a crew member or friend to attend and receive the award. As most of you know, the Club has an enviable collection of fine perpetual trophies – and we want to make sure that these travel to their (temporary) homes in the best of care.

The **membership** process is in its "busy" season. Proposers should ensure that application files are complete, with packages being forwarded to Membership Chairman Bob Edmands as soon as possible. A new change this year is that the Membership Chairman will also be the contact for obtaining Guest Invitations for racing. I encourage those of you that have sponsored past guest invitations to follow up with proposals for

membership if the guest is qualified and interested. It is not difficult to sponsor guests and propose memberships. The club benefits, and the racing is even better as a result.

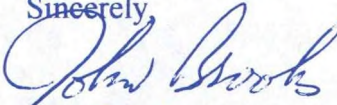
Some discussion at the Board of Governors meetings has centered on **rule violations** observed on the race course. The protest committee is in place for handling contested situations. In some cases, however, offending yachts have not withdrawn and no one has protested. While it is accurate to say that the Off Soundings Club discourages frivolous protests, it is not correct to assume that protests are therefore discouraged or unwelcome. This is an important issue, as it gets to the integrity and fairness of the competition. The Race Committee will be expanding the alternate penalty option this season to include a 720 degree Turn. A reminder, however, that the rules do restrict use of alternate penalties, stating "if she caused serious damage or gained a significant advantage in the race or the series by her breach she shall retire." As most members are aware, by our club constitution, Off Soundings Club Protest Committee decisions are final.

In the "long range view" category are two issues that may be of interest to the membership. First is a concept for a fall annual meeting and awards party - possibly in mid-November. On the plus side, this would wrap up season trophies at the end of the season, rather than the beginning of the following season. On the negative side, the trophy logistics pose a challenge, and there is the potential for conflict with the ECSCA Fall Meeting / Dinner, and other yacht club end-of-season events. The earliest that this could be instituted would be in 2005, with two "annual" meetings that year. Those members that would desire a change to the fall, please bring up the subject at the Winter Lunch in March, or indicate via a note or e-mail to me at jbrookswmystic@att.net. Results of this "poll" will be announced in April.

The other "long range" topic of interest is coming up in 2008: the 75th Anniversary of the Off Soundings Club! A history of the club is being prepared by long-time member Bruce Lockwood. I anticipate some very special highlights to the yearbook, events and regattas that year. Members interested in being a part of the planning for the 75th Anniversary year should let me or another member of the Board of Governors know.

I would be remiss in concluding without recognizing the tremendous effort put forward by each member of the Board, and the various Committee Chairmen, in working together for the ongoing health and vitality of the Off Soundings Club. As Past Commodore Wes Maxwell has noted, the Off Soundings Club really represents the active and continuing history of sailing and racing on Long Island Sound. If you have any thoughts on the above subjects, or others, please contact any member of the Board.

I look forward to seeing you at the Annual Dinner in April, if not before.

Sincerely,

John Brooks
Commodore