

OFF SOUNDINGS CLUB



Frank Bohlen, Commodore
1 Scott Lane
Mystic, Connecticut 06355

Home (860) 536-1908
Office (860) 405-9176

February 20, 2001

Dear Off Soundings Club Member

For Off-Soundings the year 2001 marks the 68th year since the Club's founding in 1933. Reviews conducted over the past several months by your Board of Governors indicate that despite advancing age the Club is in good health and continues to represent a unique and valued component of the regional sailing scene. This vitality is not sustained without effort however, and can never be taken for granted. The required effort involves the entire membership and is by no means limited to the Board and committee members. This collective contributed significantly to the success of 2000 Spring and Fall Race Series.

As discussed in my letter to you last year participation in the Race Series has been and is a matter of continuing concern. It was one of the reasons that we modified the guest invitation procedures a few years ago. During the past year we made a particular effort to introduce the Club to a broader cross-section of the sailing fraternity by direct mailings, through our new WEB site, and by personal contacts. It was this effort in combination with the hard work of Blunt White II that resulted in the introduction of a multi-hull class in the Spring Race Series. From all comments received their presence added an interesting new dimension and clearly favored some changes in our views of just what constitutes "hull speed" and its implications relative to maneuvering and right-of-way ! The image of Bill White sailing with Blunt in the Fall Series brought back many memories and provided graphic illustration of Off Soundings' ability to bridge generations while accommodating change. We recently heard that the multi-hull association has added our Spring Race to their annual series. This should encourage increased and continuing participation. We look forward to that.

In addition to the introduction of the multi-hull class, we have been closely monitoring the composition of the entire fleet with particular emphasis this year on the Cruising Canvas Class and Class C. Reviews of the latter class is an ongoing exercise driven by the continual change in ratings and performance of the racing sailboat. We

evaluate these changes each year in setting the classes but even the best of these efforts sometimes results in a less than optimum ratings spread leaving some boats at a continual disadvantage. A similar situation, albeit for a different reason, has been developing in Cruising Canvas. Here the growth in numbers and apparent popularity has resulted in large classes with a large spread in ratings. Over the past year a number of communications have been received from members asking that some effort be made to reduce the rating spread. This Fall a Committee chaired by our Measurer Norm Rabe reviewed the situation and in January recommended that an additional division be added in Cruising Canvas or rather the Non-Spinnaker Class. In addition, the Committee recommended adding an additional C class. While these modifications might influence some of the traditional rivalries they should overall improve racing quality. The recommended changes were approved at the January Board meeting and will be instituted in the 2001 Race Series.

Beyond the number and types of boats participating and the associated class distributions, the success of our Race Series is uniquely dependent on the Race Committee. Over the years Off-Soundings has been particularly fortunate to have available a skilled and dedicated group of individuals willing to forego racing in the interest of race management. This year the Race Committee under the able leadership of Chuck Chorlton continued to set the standard by which excellence in race management is judged. This fact was recognized by ECSA in the award of the Stu Silvestri Trophy during their November Annual Meeting and dinner. To this we add our appreciation to Chuck and to the entire Race Committee for a job "well done".

As a supplement to Spring and Fall Race Series portions of the membership compete each year in the Dyer Derby at Mystic Seaport. This is a spirited and free form regatta which requires formation of a team including juniors, seniors, heavyweights, dogs, etc. Off-Soundings typically makes a respectable showing and on occasion has won. This year a team captained by Carl and Val Fast added one more "win" to the Off Soundings record ! I know that they were supported in this effort by a number of their children consistent with the family approach they use so often in the Spring/Fall Series and their racing of Looney Tunes . Looks like another dynasty in the making.

This mention of Carl and Val Fast reminds me that this year marks the 25th Anniversary of the founding of the Mudheads. Growing from an immodest beginning this group in their sponsorship of the Wednesday Night Series in Fishers Island Sound has come to represent a significant element of the local racing scene and one that is enjoyed by many of us. Happy Birthday MUDHEADS !

This variety of participation has made for a full year in the history of Off-Soundings. For those of you interested in seeing how our current activities compare to those of past years a viewing of the historical video prepared by Ken Mahler, and shown in draft form at last April's OSC Annual Dinner, is an absolute requirement. Ken has now completed editing and the final version is available for purchase from Mystic Seaport. Beyond its value as an archival record of the evolution of cruising and racing over the past 60 years viewing this video is just plain fun ! I strongly recommend getting your own copy. We'll have some available at the upcoming Annual Dinner.

Another historical note. On March 23-24 Mystic Seaport has scheduled the 2001 Yachting History Symposium. This year's theme will be Voyaging: Sailing in Deep Waters . The program, including talks by voyagers, designers and historians promises to be thought provoking and of interest to many of our members. The session begins on Friday night with a presentation by Olin Stephens, Don Treworgy and Rich King on this past summer's voyage of Brilliant and the subsequent Atlantic Circle. This in itself should be worth the price of admission. Information on the Seminar is available from Mystic Seaport (860) 572-5341 or via e-mail at karinf@mysticseaport.org

While the historical view provides an interesting and valued perspective, the strength of any club must be measured by its ability to move forward. This vitality is singularly dependent on the membership. Recognizing this we seek your input on every aspect of club operations and we look to you to bring forward energetic applicants for membership. As promised last year, we have established a WEB site (<http://offsoundings.org>) and are in the process of slowly expanding capabilities. This year we're exploring adding a Chat Room or Bulletin Board to receive your comments, ideas and suggestions and to pass them along to your fellow members. In the meantime don't hesitate to e-mail me directly or through the Webmaster or even use U.S. Mail ! We're also continuing this year to schedule a number of mid-winter luncheons. This season's first luncheon will be held on Wednesday March 7, 2001 at noon at the Seahorse-on-Thames, one mile north of Electric Boat in Groton ((860) 449-0074). Eight (8) dollars buys lunch w/o drinks. Call Ed Purcell at (860) 536-6732 by March 4th to make a reservation. Our second lunch will be held in Branford at noon on March 13th at Lenny's. Members in the area will be receiving a mailing. I'm also looking into the possibility of another luncheon in Rhode Island and/or the Shelter Island area. Look for mail notices as well as a posting to the Web. I hope that you'll take advantage of these to bring along and introduce potential new members to the Club or to simply get together with friends that you may not have seen since last Fall.

One subject sure to elicit comment and a regular component of any discussion of participation is the matter of venue . You'll recall that several years ago then Commodore Bill Gunther established a committee to examine a variety of potential locations for future race series. The list included Newport, Rhode Island, Montauk, New York and Sag Harbor, N.Y. The membership was polled to determine preferences with the results favoring continuation of the series at Block Island and Shelter Island. In January of this year I asked the Long Range Planning Committee, chaired by past Commodore Andy Anderson to revisit the subject and if necessary bring the results of the past membership poll up-to-date. We'd like to hear your thoughts on the value of changing venue and potential alternatives. Look for an update on this subject at the Annual Meeting in April.

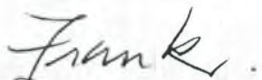
Finally, I'd like to call your attention to a couple of seminars that should be of interest. The first sponsored by CCA and entitled "Suddenly Alone" is intended specifically for cruising couples or short handed crew. Scheduled for April 7,2001 at the Mystic Hilton the seminar will present a series of talks intended to assist a spouse or other crew develop the knowledge and confidence to take command in the event of incapacitation of the Captain. Call Nancy Helme at (401)846-6711 or bsbwn@aol.com for reservations.

The second is a series of seminars by Dave Perry dealing with the new Racing Rules. The first is scheduled for April 5 at Milford Yacht Club and the second April 16th at the Coast Guard Academy in New London (both at 7:30-10pm). Observations over the past several years suggest to me that attendance at this latter seminar might be of especial value and eliminate some "disagreements" on the race course. Of particular interest might be the subject of "hunting". This is a practice that might add some excitement in dinghy sailing but seemingly has little place in events like Off-Soundings. A number of occurrences during our races of the past year indicate to me that we need to exercise care in the application of some aspects of the Rule to our races and may need to consider event specific amendments. Let me know what you think.

I look forward to seeing you at the Annual Dinner in April. We're returning to Mystic Seaport after a long hiatus. Vice Commodore Maxwell promises a full evening.

Happy New Year !!

Sincerely,



W. Frank Bohlen
Commodore