

Sarasota Model Yacht Club

1996 – 2021
Craig A Collemer

*"I know there is more to life than sailing,
just let me know when you find it!"*

Anonymous

It seems that the 20th anniversary (2016) of the Sarasota Model Yacht Club (SMYC) is a suitable occasion to put to paper an ever-evolving history of the club. While the SMYC is a fairly young organization, its history is worthy of preservation. This is the first attempt to bring our history together in written form and will, hopefully, provide a basis for the recording of our ongoing history. In twenty years from now, we hope those who follow us will find this history helpful and that our contributions have enriched their sailing experience.

The Early Years: A Vision of Two Sailors

"A sailor is an artist whose medium is the wind."

Webb Chiles

Like most worthy endeavors, the SMYC started with a small group of individuals, two in fact, and slowly evolved into the great sailing club we enjoy today. In 1996 Milt Thrasher and Dick "Sherm" Sherman decided they wanted to sail radio-controlled sailboats (Soling 1 Meter) and would be open to others joining them. They each built their own boats and began sailing in the lake behind Milt's house in Huntington Pointe on the south side of Sarasota. Sherm went to The Sports Authority, purchased some ducks for marks of the sailing course and they were off and running...or we should say, sailing (those ducks are still there twenty years later). While they enjoyed their time together, Milt and Sherm wanted to share the fun and decided to invite a crew from the Suncoast News Network television station to come to their lake and present a piece about their little group on the evening news. The station sent out a crew to interview Milt and Sherm and film their sailing adventures. When it aired, they included a telephone number interested individuals could call. Well, the phone started ringing, and

ringing, and ringing with a number of interested persons contacting them. (I think we should do this in the near future and list Curt's cell phone number in the piece.)

Soon, the lake behind Milt's house wasn't large enough for the growing fleet and they moved all the way across the street to the lake behind Sherm's house. Quite a bit larger, this lake accommodated this growing group for a number of years. Eventually, however, it became apparent that a larger and more convenient venue was needed. For a while the members gathered at a lake at Camelot East off Clark Road, then the members made the move to the lake behind The Meadows Shopping Village. Race Director, Al Sefton, who joined the club in 1999, built a dock in 2004 and the group had a new home. Following races, the members would retire to a restaurant next to the lake. This location served their needs for a number of years. Eventually they moved down the road in the lake next to the Meadows Community Center and offices. The Meadows constructed a dock for ease of launching and retrieving boats. As a reflection on the "good ol' days," this was before there was a need for liability insurance for the club!

In these early years the group used a tape recording and "boom box" for the count-down clock. The records indicate that Trevor Lambert, the treasurer, purchased a "boom box" for the grand sum of \$30. The major problem with the "boom box" was that races were often postponed until someone could secure fresh batteries to replace the ones that had been drained of all power. Without a doubt, the most frequent expenditure entry in the treasurer's report that time was the purchase of batteries! We also have a record of Jack Norris buying new ducks for marks for the grand sum of \$16.00.

An interesting piece of our history is that in the early years the boats and transmitters were crystal controlled. Your "frequency number" was more important than your sail number. In the roster, you were listed by your crystal frequency number and not your sail number. Eventually, the club bought the crystals, and distributed them to the sailors. Can you imagine having to remember a crystal number as well as a sail number?

As early as 2002, the club was joining other clubs and joined by other clubs for regattas. The Golden Triangle Model Yacht Club, for instance,

invited our club to join them for a regatta at Freedom Lake in Pinellas Park in St. Petersburg and the University Park Club joined our club for The Meadows Regatta.

The first treasurer was Jack Peters. Trevor Lambert succeeded Jack in 1999 and continues as treasurer to this day.

A couple of our longest tenured members are Trevor Lambert and Al Sefton who joined in 1997 and 1999 respectively.

Reflecting on these early years invites us to express our deep appreciation to the two gentlemen who are responsible for the founding of our club. While Milt's health is failing, we are delighted Sherm is still an active member of our club and has a great deal to teach others about Soling construction (he's built over a dozen boats) and sailing technique. We salute our two founding members: Dick Sherman and Milt Thrasher! (Editor's note: we are sad to report that Milt Thrasher passed on in 2016)

The Formative Years: The Vision Grows

"Land was created to provide a place for boats to visit."

Kenneth Grahame

Of course, any sailing club needs a leader. As we know, managing a group of sailors can be like shepherding cats. So, those early sailors elected Jack Norris as the club's first commodore. Subsequent commodores include Sam Montondo, Al Sefton, Bob Nichols, Jay Conlon, Curt Kasten and our current commodore, Will Parry.

Likewise, it was deemed appropriate in 2000 that the group should have a governing document. Sam Montondo was charged with writing a constitution (see a copy in the Appendix) which, to be honest, has largely been ignored ever since. For instance, our constitution states:

1. Any member not racing one series of the five or more races per year shall be determined to be a "social" member and shall forfeit his/her radio frequency.

2. The officers shall be a Commodore, Vice-Commodore, Rear Commodore and Secretary-Treasurer.
3. There shall also be a Regatta Director (which it would seem is our Race Director).
4. There is to be a Board of Directors.
5. It states that “All members shall play fairly by the racing rules and by the unwritten ‘Golden Rule’” (an earlier version of *The Corinthian Spirit*, I would say).
6. I also noted that nowhere in the constitution does the term Jackwagon appear and does not, implicitly, give the commodore the authority to declare anyone to be said Jackwagon (sorry Curt!). Of course, it doesn’t forbid such liberties on the part of the commodore either.

Finances, thankfully, are but a small part of our life as a group of sailors. Like any volunteer organization, however, there are inevitably some expenses incurred. To meet these expenses, annual dues have been assessed.

Since the earliest years, the annual dues have been kept minimal to cover expenses:

1996 = \$5 annually.
2004 = \$10
2009 = \$10 (\$15 for new members)
2015 = \$20 (\$25 for new members)
2016 = \$20 for all members
2017 = \$30 for all members
2020 = \$70 for all members (increase to cover a fee charged by SANCA for the use of the lake at Nathan Benderson Park)

These dues cover such expenses as ducks and marks, liability insurance coverage, awards, caps for new members, materials, fee to SANCA, etc.

Our esteemed treasurer, Trevor Lambert, keeps a steady hand on the till as he fulfills his responsibilities of our growing clubs.

In November 2009 the club secured a “Count Down Starter” which was made by Trevor Lambert.

The record of dues paid indicates that the first woman to join the club was in 2004 when Susie Whitmore joined. Since then several other women have joined the club...all are welcome!

The Present: The Vision is Alive and Well

“I can’t control the wind, but I can adjust the sail.”

Ricky Skaggs

The last few years have been a time of many changes that have led to significant growth in the club’s membership and laid a solid foundation for the future. Some of these recent developments include:

2011

With support from Denise Hodgson, in memory of her husband Bob, the club donated a bench at The Meadows Lake for all passersby to enjoy and to enable sailors to take an occasional break from the “stresses of sailing.” Bob Hodgson, who was the editor of *Trailer and Sailor* magazine, was an active member and sailed number 314, which was called “Pi.”

To lessen any potential damage to boats, bumpers were mandated on the bow of all boats participating in races.

2012

Wind indicators were purchased and installed on the dock at The Meadows.

2014

John “Boatyard” Stryhn joined the club in 2014 and quickly became the “go to guy” for boat repairs, paint jobs, etc. His boatyard, that is, his house – with Patricia’s gracious consent – is the place to go if a member wants to buy or sell a Soling/DF95, have a boat repaired, or have a new boat built. John’s expertise and willingness to help his

fellow sailors have kept many sailors on the water rather than in dry dock.

An expenditure of \$200 was contributed by the club for the construction of a new dock on the east shore at The Meadows. This means the club had a dock on the northern and eastern shore of the lake.

Tutorial sessions were held at The Meadows for new sailors and those wishing to “brush up” on their tuning and sailing skills. These were often held the first hour of sailing on Tuesdays. Some time was spent teaching and then there was time for one-on-one help offered by more experienced sailors.

An enjoyable new event added in 2014 is an annual “Classic Boat Day.” This annual event is an opportunity for club members are encouraged to bring non-Soling classic boats to sail and even race. These boats have included Marblehead class, US 12’s, and EC 12’s.

2015

With several new members who had a variety of sailing experience joining, the club began a one-on-one mentoring program in February. A seasoned sailor works with a new member for several months to learn the basics of tuning, maintenance, tactics, and the basic rules of racing. This has Mentoring Program has proved to be a valuable program for new sailors.

Several members of the University Park Soling Club joined our club as their club ceased as an active club. It has been great to have them sailing with us.

A club locker of Soling supplies was created by John “Boatyard” Stryhn. Since the local availability of Soling supplies is limited, having these supplies on-hand has been a great benefit for members needing to make repairs.

Club member Dave Kerrigan donated a radio-controlled tugboat to help with setting and retrieving marks and rescuing distressed boats. This makes like much easier for all. Thank you, Dave!

A major development for the club came with the agreement between our club and Suncoast Aquatic Nature Center Associates, Inc. (SANCA is the operator of the Nathan Benderson Park) for use of one of the northern lakes at the park for our practice and racing. Our commodore, Curt Kasten, negotiated this new venue for our fall, winter and spring sailing series. In the summer we will sail at The Meadows in order to take advantage of the shade provided by the trees. A couple of advantages come to our members with this move: 1) as the larger trees at The Meadows often create a "fluky" wind situation, the Benderson lake provides a venue with much steadier winds, and 2) it offers an alternative venue (The Meadows) for members who do not want to race but enjoy getting together and sailing. This "cruising group" has grown to more than eight sailors and sails the same time as the racing group.

SANCA and the SMYC are pursuing several joint ventures in the near future, including the club's participation in Benderson Park's Community Day and a summer camp for young sailors.

While SANCA looks forward to further developments at the lake we currently use, there were no docks available for our use for launching and retrieving our boats. One of our new members from the University Park club, C. David Wilson, graciously volunteered to make two docks for our use. We now have docks on the north and west sides of the lake. These docks make our time at the lake much more enjoyable...and safe!

The Bradenton Yacht Club invited members of our club to attend one of their monthly dinners for a presentation on radio-controlled sailing and the workings of our club. Will Parry, Curt Kasten, and Craig Collemer brought a computerized photo montage of our sailoring activities as well as three of our Soling boas. We had a wonderful evening with the Bradenton Yacht Club members and appreciated their hospitality.

The Suncoast Model Yacht Club of Punta Gorda and our club have developed a friendship that led to four of their members joining us in Sarasota for a day of sailing and tuning lessons led by Art Hawes and Jack Ward, both national Soling champions. Art also bought his US 12

so our members could take it for a sail. Several of our members have gone down to their club in Punta Gorda for regattas and for Soling sailing lessons.

2016

2016 was a year of continued growth and some significant changes for the club.

In October, Commodore Curt Kasten conveyed his desire to retire as Commodore immediately due to some ongoing health issues. Curt served the club faithfully for over 6 years. During that time, he often carried the full weight of the club on his shoulders fulfilling the role of Commodore, Vice Commodore, managing the courses including supplies, and maintain a positive relationship with the management of The Meadows and SANCA. The club's indebtedness to Curt cannot be adequately expressed in words.

In this time of transition, a new set of bylaws were written and approved, the club incorporated, and new and broader insurance was secured that would cover the club more fully in the event of a liability issue. A heartfelt thank you goes to Chad Kasten to completing all the legal and paperwork and for Will Parry for steering the process to completion by the end of the year.

Al Sefton, our long-serving Race Director, decided it was time to step relinquish this important role after 6 years of incredibly faithful service to our club. It is the race director's role to see that the races are held in a fair, safe, and enjoyable manner and Al fulfilled this role with incredible dedication.

These club members agreed to immediately serve in leadership roles:

Will Parry, Commodore

Craig Collemer, Vice Commodore & Race Director

Curt Kasten, Rear Commodore

Trevor Lambert, Treasurer

John Stryhn, board member-at-large

In March, 2016 the Sarasota Herald-Tribune newspaper sent a reporter and photographer to the lake to interview our commodore and several members as well as video our boats on the water. On Wednesday, March 16 an excellent article appeared in the paper highlighting our club. This was great publicity for our activities. (See the article in the Appendix)

In April, the club was saddened to learn of the death of one of our founding members, Milton Thrasher following a long illness. Milt was an avid sailor, built several large boats as well as half-models, full models, and radio-controlled boats in addition to being a founding member, along with Dick Sherman, of the SMYC.

In September 2017, the local ABC television station sent a videographer and long time local reporter Linda Carson to the lake to interview club members and video our boats sailing. The videographer spent a full two hours filming our club including interviews with Commodore Will Parry, Read-Commodore Curt Kasten, and Vice-Commodore and Race Director Craig Collemer. Linda Carson presented a wonderful piece on our club on the evening news a few days later. This was wonderful publicity for our club.

In the fall, our club was invited to offer a r/c sailing demonstration at the Sarasota Yacht Club during the annual fall welcome-back weekend celebration. While the sailing conditions between the boat slips was far from ideal, the SMYC members offered a fun demonstration of r/c sailing.

Several new members have joined as a result of the increased visibility of our sailing at the Nathan Benderson Park lake. As of February 2016 we have 58 due paying members, which makes us one of the largest Soling sailing clubs in the country. New members now receive a SYMC cap and a number of documents outlining the club's sailing procedures and general racing rules the club follows.

One major factor in our growth has been the services offered by "Boatyard" John Stryhn. John uses his skills as a master builder to repair member's boats and build new boats for sailors. His services enable new members to acquire or rent a boat quickly and be on the

water enjoying our racing days. John restored boats that ended up on the bottom of the lake to the point that they look brand new. We are all indebted to John for his unceasing help to enable us to continue to sail with minimal disruption from mechanical issues.

2017

2017 began with the initiation of a Blessing of the Fleet Service led by Rev. Craig Collemer. This brief service at the new year was a coming together of over 30 club members for a blessing of our vessels, ourselves, and our fellowship time together. The service was closed with a reading of the *Sailors 23rd Psalm*.

A major development for the club was the welcoming of the Laser class as our second class of boats. Following a presentation by Jim Pascalides and Dave Fine, the board of directors approved this second class for our club. Under Jim and Dave's leadership, the Laser class grew to 12 boats.

The growth of the club's membership (64) was reflected in the 2017 Winter Series. A total of 59 Soling sailors raced in this series with 39 racing in one day's races in late February and 12 Laser sailors raced. The club members own a total of 92 Soling 1 Meter boats (apparently, some can't get enough!) and 12 Lasers.

64 members and spouses attended the Annual Award Dinner in March at the Peridia Golf and Country Club in Bradenton. It was a wonderful event and Peridia provided an excellent meal. A video entitled "Continue to Sail" produced by *In the Sky* production company was shown to those gathered. It is a professionally video filmed with a drone hovering over the lake as our boats practiced and raced. Commodore Will Parry and Vice Commodore Craig Collemer presented various serious and fun awards throughout the evening. The highlight was the presentation of the 2017 Commodore's Award to Craig Collemer (Vice Commodore, Race Director, and Historian) and Will presenting past Commodore/Vice Commodore Curt Kasten with a half hull of a Soling as a token of the club members' appreciation for his six years of service as Commodore. Trevor Lambert was also recognized for his 21 years of

service as “The Best Damn Jam Jar Treasurer!” A grand time was had by all.

The SMYC continues to have a website (www.Sarasotamyc.com) that enables anyone to learn of our activities and encourages their participation. The website contains a video highlighting our club that was produced by *In the Sky Productions*.

Our snowbird sailors continue to grow in numbers. We currently have members who travel from Canada, Switzerland, and Great Britain as well as the following states: Maine, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Illinois, Michigan, and Ohio.

The ongoing dedication and appreciation of our members has been evident by the generosity of several members and their families who have donated boats and supplies to the club. These boats were often repaired or upgraded and then sold with the proceeds donated to the club treasury. We are grateful for their thoughtfulness.

One of the on-going technical issue often faced by club members is maximizing their servo's pairing with their transmitters. A “servo adjuster” was purchased by the club and with the technical assistance of Nick Morgan and Will Parry club members have been able to get the most out of their servos.

In September 2017, Nathan Benderson Park, where we sail, was host to the World Cup Rowing Championship. While we were initially told that due to security reasons we would not be able to sail the week of the races, at the last minute, Mr. Randy Benderson asked us if we would sail during the race week. He thought it would be great for the tens of thousands of spectators to see us sailing. We decided to hold the first annual *Nathan Benderson Regatta* to raise money for the park’s summer camp where we teach sailing to kids using our Solings. This was a great five-day event and helped to solidify our relationship with Nathan Benderson Park and the managers of the park (SANCA). During our racing, Randy Benderson stopped by and told our race director, Craig Collemer, that he loves that we’re sailing at the lake and would like to support us in our future plans for our club at the lake.

In November 2017, Commodore Will Parry, Vice Commodore Craig Collemer, and Rear Commodore Curt Kasten met with Mr. Benderson and two staff members to discuss our future at Nathan Benderson Park. Mr. Benderson made it clear that he wants to make it possible for us to continue to sail at the park and is eager to help us make our sailing experience as positive as possible in the years to come. This reassurance of Mr. Benderson's support of our club was welcomed news. In the coming months and years, we will work with Mr. Benderson and SANCA staff to develop a plan for our future together.

2018

The year began with the second annual Blessing of the Fleet service led by Rev. Craig Collemer with over 30 sailors attending. The Blessing of the Fleet Service is an ancient service dating back to the 16th century in southern Europe. The members appreciate this time of blessing of each of us and our time together.

A third class of boats was approved by the SMYC board of directors. Under the enthusiastic and able guidance of Curt and Chad Kasten, the club began to sail the DF95 class. These fast boats offer another alternative to members of our club. Soon there were 32 DF95 boats in the club. With this additional deep keel boat, we quickly recognized the need for additional courses. With the cooperation of SANCA, we soon had courses set on the east lake.

March was a busy month:

As the Winter Series concluded, a potluck dinner was held on the 5th floor of the Finish Tower at Nathan Benderson Park with 92 members and guests in attendance. The tower provided a spectacular view of greater Sarasota although we seem to be already outgrowing this venue. This was a great time of fellowship with our guests.

The third annual Cystic Fibrosis Charity Regatta was held under the leadership of Curt Kasten and Tim Peat and was a tremendous success. 31 sailors participated (up from 26 last year) and over \$3,400 was raised (up from \$2,600 last year). Once again, the snowbirds went home with the trophy.

In October 2018, our club hosted the Victoria Class National Championship Regatta under the able leadership of Bill Schmeising and Primary Race Officer Slip Newfield. 12 sailors from around the country spent the weekend sailing for the national championship.

2018

Once again, the new year began with a Blessing of the Fleet Service led by Rev. Craig Collemer. Over 40 members participated in the meaningful service that has become an annual tradition appreciated by many members.

The annual banquet was held in March at the Peridia Country Club in Bradenton. 70 members and guests attended and enjoyed a wonderful evening of delicious food and the presentation of many awards. The first annual *Race Director's Award for the Most Improved Sailor* was presented by Craig Collemer to Richard Lomax for the great strides he has made in the past year. Richard was presented with a beautiful compass trophy donated to the club by Bob Phelps. The 2018 *Commodore's Award* was presented to Nick Morgan in recognition of his dedication and efforts on behalf of the club members processing the scores day after day, week after week year-round. Nick's many talents and dedication enable the club members to see their scores in an accurate and timely fashion. Jim Pascalides and Chad Kasten presented fun gifts of appreciation along with appropriate recognition of the officers, board members, and volunteers who work week in and week keeping the club sailing along. It is noted that there are currently 81 dues paying members who own over 105 Soling 1 Meter boats, 12 Lasers, and 24 DF95's.

The third annual Cystic Fibrosis Charity Regatta was held in March under the able leadership of Mike Feldman. The Florida Crackers went home with the trophy this year. 31 sailors participated (up from 26 in 2017) and raised over \$3,400 for the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation (up from a little over \$2,600 in 2017). Not only was a great time had by all, but a great cause benefited from our efforts.

2019

2019 again was off to a great start with the annual Blessing of the Fleet Service with over 40 members in attendance.

Under the able leadership of Dave Fine, on January 19 & 20, our club hosted 25 of the best Laser sailors from across the US and the Bahamas for the 2019 National Championship Regatta. The first day proved to be a perfect Florida day for Laser racing with a lot of sunshine and 10 -13 mph winds. The second day proved to be a bit more challenging with wind speeds in the high teens and low 20's with gusts near 30 mph under cloudy skies. These experienced sailors handled the winds with little difficulty. Slip Newfield served as the Principle Race Director and over 15 SMYC sailors volunteered throughout the weekend to make this what many described as the best NCR for Lasers anyone could recall.

The number of sailors and boats in our club continues to grow. At the beginning of 2019 there were 131 Solings, 32 DF95's, and 12 Lasers in our club for a total of 175 boats in our club. Most sailors sail one class, a few sail two classes, and a small number sail in all three classes (their spouses are, obviously, very understanding!).

Our Annual Cystic Fibrosis Charity Regatta was notable for several reasons. Under the leadership of Mike Feldman, the most sailors ever entered this year's regatta: 38 sailors enjoyed the fun, competition, and donated to a great cause. Secondly, this was the first year the DF95 fleet sailed in the regatta. Third, this year's 2019 CF Regatta raised the most money ever; \$4,090 was raised for a great cause through the generosity of 48 contributors. For the second consecutive year, the Florida Crackers walked off with the trophy. We sailed under almost perfect conditions this year and a great time was had by all. A huge thank you goes to Mike Feldman, all the volunteers, and sailors for making this year such a successful regatta.

Our Annual Awards Banquet was held the end of March at the Peridia Golf and Country Club in Bradenton with 96 members and guests present. After a wonderful meal, awards were presented to the top finishers in the four sailing series sailed since the last banquet. The Commodore's Award was presented to Vice-Commodore Bill

Schmeising for his tireless efforts on behalf of the club. Bill has served as Vice-Commodore, represented SMYC superbly with SANCA/Nathan Benderson Park, been an able dock builder, and offered wisdom and wit when needed the most among his many contribution over the years.

The Race Director's Soling 1 Meter Most Improved Soling Sailor Award was presented to Jamie McLane. This award was presented to Jamie by last year's winner (like the Masters Green Jacket presentation!) Richard Lomax. Craig Collemer, Soling fleet captain, once again entertained those gathered with his "special awards." Many sailors have let it be known that they would be just as happy if they weren't the recipient of these "notable" awards!

May 18 – A farewell party was held at Glory Days Grille for Al Sefton as he prepared to move to be closer to his son. Al was presented with a plaque declaring him to be an Honorary Life Member in recognition of his 23 years as a SMYC member, serving as commodore, and 7 years as Soling race director. Al will be missed by all.

2020

This new year began with some significant changes, changes, and many familiar opportunities for the club.

As of January 1st, the SMYC became an official affiliate of SANCA (the organization that operates the parks where we sail and provides supportive services for the club). This meant a significant increase in our dues, but the board of directors felt this was a positive step for our future.

Our annual Blessing of the Fleet and Remembrance Service was held January 30 with over 40 sailors in attendance. This brief service is a wonderful opportunity for our sailors to come together to seek a blessing from the Creator of the seas and the earth and all the inhabit them. We also took a moment to remember two members who passed on this year: Paul Flattery and Walter Bryde. Paul was a long-time Soling sailor who was always a "gentleman's gentleman" who sailed by the Corinthian Spirit. Walter was a recent member who, along with his father, joined the club and enjoyed the sailing and fellowship. It was

wonderful that Walt's father was able to be with us for this remembrance. Both will be missed.

In January we hosted the Region 7 IOM (International One Meter) Championship Regatta. It was a great success and provided a great time for all. Because we have multiple shores of our two lakes available for sailing, we were able to have our DF 95 and Soling fleets sail while the IOM regatta was underway. It was wonderful to see so many sailors enjoy our great venue.

In February we hosted the Soling Region 7 Championship Regatta. 24 sailors and 18 Volunteers provided another great regatta at Nathan Benderson Regatta. Again, we heard numerous compliments regarding our venue and the team work of our volunteers to provide a great experience for some of the best the Soling sailors in the country.

After 24 years of service as our club treasurer, Trevor Lambert decided it was time to pass along the "jam jar" to a new treasurer. When Trevor started as treasurer, he literally kept the dues in a "jam jar." Now a spreadsheet program is required with over 100 members. Trevor served our club with skill and faithfulness for those 24 years. We extend our deep gratitude to Trevor and will enjoy continuing to sail with him. We are also grateful that Al Knezevich agreed to serve as our treasurer and has ably moved into this role as he and Trevor transitioned from one to the other.

In March we held our annual Cystic Fibrosis (CF) Snowbirds vs. Crackers Regatta. The winners were the Florida Crackers and CF. We raised over \$5,000 for CF this year. It was a record year in terms of the number of sailors and the amount raised for CF thanks to those who sailed and the tremendous leadership of Mike Feldman as the regatta chairman.

A New Fleet: In June the board of directors authorized a new fleet to be established for SMYC members at the encouragement of Curt Kasten. There was an expressed interest in a fleet for members who want to be able to sail a somewhat slower boat while either sitting or standing, on a shorter course to aid those with vision and/or mobility limitations. A committee was created to research a boat that would serve this sector

of our membership with an eye to starting this fleet in the fall. In June, the board of directors accepted the recommendation of the research committee that the DF65 would best serve this fleet. We look forward to this fleet beginning to sail under fleet captain Jim Pascalides in the fall of 2020.

Shortly after the very successful Cystic Fibrosis Regatta in March, the Covid-19 pandemic bought a sudden halt to our official racing. Our home for sailing, Nathan Benderson Park, closed the park to all organized events; including our sailing. Individuals were permitted to use the park for exercise, but not organized events were permitted. We resumed sailing in May with the requirement of wearing masks and social distancing (enjoying time at a local restaurant after sailing continued to be suspended due to the need for social distancing), but in mid-July once again it was decided to suspend sailing due to the rise in Covid-19 cases in Florida. The board of directors took this action out of an abundance of caution for the welfare of our members. We will resume our regular sailing schedule when it appears safe to do so. In September we were able to resume sailing under strict CDC guidelines. It was great to be back at the lake, sailing our various classes of boats, and being with our friends at SMYC.

During the fall it became clear that Mote Marine was going to move forward with its plans to build a large aquarium and research/educational center on the property where we sail. While the exact timeline of their construction starting date is unclear, we realized we needed to start making plans for an alternative sailing venue. Through ongoing conversations with SANCA, we learned they were willing to offer us the use of the lake at the corner of Honore Ave and Athletes Drive. A great deal of clearing of trees and shrubbery needs to occur before we can sail there, but SANCA has made a commitment to make this lake a viable venue for us. We have tentative plans to move to this new lake in March 2021.

Also in the fall, one of our long term members, Al Sefton, passed away. Al was an active member for 23 years, served as commodore and, most recently, served as Race Director for the Soling Fleet. Al was a gracious gentleman who gave freely of himself to SMYC over nearly a quarter of a century and he will be dearly missed.

2021

The SMYC continued to sail under strict CDC guidelines. We are grateful for the support of the managers of Nathan Benderson Park, SANCA, for enabling us to sail under the proper guidelines.

Due to Covid 19, many of our snowbird friends are not able to be with us for our Winter Series which usually has the largest fleets in all our classes of boats. We miss our friends from up north who could not be with us this year.

Given the travel restrictions imposed by Covid 19, the board voted to postpone the regattas were scheduled to host in the first half of 2021; including the national Soling regatta originally scheduled for April.

In January, Rev. Craig Collemer led our annual Blessing of the Fleet Service on a Saturday following the sailing of the Solings and DF 95's and before the DF65 would sail. Over 40 members attended this brief service of blessing.

Immediately following the *Blessing of the Fleet* Service, an awards ceremony was held due to the fact that we were unable to hold our annual awards banquet due to the constraints of Covid 19. Additionally, the club accepted and dedicated two gifts given to the club by Al Sefton's family in his honor. We gratefully accepted *The Al Sefton Most Creative Soling Sailor Award* plaque that will be presented annually to a Soling sailor and *The Al Sefton Loaner Boat* (a Soling) that will be available as a loaner boat for new members to be able to get on the lake quickly and for members whose boat is in "dry dock" for repairs. We are humbled and grateful to Al's family for these gifts presented in Al's memory.

Craig Collemer presented the *Most Improved Soling Sailor Award* to Samir Ansary and the first recipient of the Al Sefton Most Creative Soling Sailor Award was our vice-commodore, Bill Schmeising for a remarkable fleet of sailing his boat in two lakes and under a bridge twice without touching his transmitter (it's a long story!).

Commodore Will Parry presented our club's highest award for significant service to our club to Jerry Wheeler. Jerry is a unassuming member who is always ready, willing and able to assist our club in a variety of ways. Currently, he is fleet captain of the Laser fleet and other senior group that sails at The Meadows on Tuesdays. Jerry has helped build docks, rake out weeds, and any number of other needed tasks. Congratulations to Jerry Wheeler, 2020/2021 Commodore's Award recipient.

The officers and fleet captains for 2021 are:

Commodore: Will Parry

Vice Commodore: Bill Schmeising

Treasurer: Al Knezevich

Fleet Captains:

Soling: Craig Collemer

DF 95: Bill Hendrickson

DF 65: Rob Wucki

Laser : Jerry Wheeler

IOM: Mike Feldman

The summer of 2021 was a significant time for SMYC as this is when we moved from the center and east lakes of Nathan Benderson Park to Green Parrot Lake located at the SW corner of the park. A great deal of work had to be accomplished to make this lake a viable site for our sailing and the group that manages the park (SANCA) came through and provided us with a lake that meets our needs. Work will continue on the lake through the year to make it the best lake possible for our sailing. The peninsula, in particular, underwent a major effort to make it a good sailing venue for two fleets at the same time.

The fall of 2021 brought some good news to SMYC as we were able to finally host the Soling 1 Meter National Championship Regatta that had been postponed since earlier in the year due to Covid 19. Under the guidance of Regatta Coordinator Craig Collemer, the members of SMYC came through to offer a terrific championship regatta. A great deal of work was done on our new lake, Green Parrot Lake, by the staff of SANCA and our own volunteers. Under the guidance of Chad Kasten, the regatta Principle Race Officer (PRO), the marks were set around the

peninsula for any wind condition the weekend of the regatta. The weekend of November 19 – 21 brought perfect Florida weather for the first Soling NCR held in two years. We had a steady wind of 8 – 13 mph out of the NE for the three days of the regatta. It may well be the only national championship regatta ever held where the course did not have to be changed once. Chad Kasten did a yeoman's job as the PRO, Richard Lomax keep the scores accurate, Jim Polise provided the coffee, donuts, snacks and lunch each day, and over 20 other volunteers from SMYC enabled us to have a tremendous regatta. It truly takes a whole club's effort to host a national regatta. Thanks in large part to Doug Reiger, owner of 3DRC Model Boats, who donated a Soling 3 hull kit, which was the main item of a raffle, the regatta raised over \$1,300 for SMYC. For the third consecutive year, our own Peter Feldman walked away with the national championship trophy. Nine other SMYC skippers sailed in the regatta and made us all proud.

We look forward to hosting other regattas in the future including the IOM Gator Roundup in January 2022 and the Florida DF 95 traveling regatta in the spring of 2022.

2022

On January 22 & 23 the IOM Gator Roundup Regatta was held under the guidance and planning of Mike Feldman. With a great turnout of 33 skippers from across the country the two-day competition was excellent. The weather wasn't the best, a bit cool for Florida this time of year, but the enthusiasm was high and a very competitive regatta was enjoyed by all. The top six finishers were: Peter Feldman , Gary Boell, Chuck Millican, Gary Winton, Steve Landau, and Tony Gonsalves. Other SMYC members participating were: Mike Feldman, Ron Prokop, Jim Egan, Steve Holdeman, Marshall Pardy and John Stryhn.

February brought a sad note to our club with word of the passing of Dick "Sherm" Sherman, one of our club's two founding members. Sherm and Milt Thrasher began the club in 1998 sailing in a pond behind Milt's house. As word got around town that an r/c sailing club had been founded, they moved across the street to the larger pond behind Sherm's house. He was a master boat builder and skipper of various r/c

sailboats in addition to being a “big boat” sailor. We are grateful for Sherm’s early efforts to bring about the creation of SMYC.

Our efforts to host the DF 95 Region 7 Championship Regatta was met by some significant challenges; particularly, hurricane Ian. Originally scheduled for October 8 & 9, the regatta was held two weeks later due to the closure of Nathan Benderson Park following the damage caused by the hurricane. Fortunately, our lake suffered minimal damage and regatta coordinator Bill Hendrickson did a yeoman’s job of rally the club members to be certain our lake and marks were in excellent condition for the regatta. Principle Race Office Al Knezevich’s efforts and spirit enabled all sailors to have a successful regatta. The following were the top five sailors: Tony Gonzales, first; Barr Baker, 2nd; Martin Bowers, 3rd; Martin Gray, 4th and Jim Egan, 5th. Twenty-six sailors participated in the regatta.

2022 Awards Ceremony: Due to the linger effects of Covid 19, the club held its 2022 awards ceremony at the Nathan Benderson Park finish tower on a beautiful day. Rather than at our normal location; Peridia Golf and Country Club in Bradenton, we enjoyed a beautiful breeze and the shelter of the tower patio area. We began with a luncheon enjoyed by the sailors and then the presentation of awards was held. Each fleet captain presented the certificates for each season their class raced throughout the year as well as some humorous awards. The 2022 awards presented are listed below.

2022 An All Club Luncheon: A luncheon for all sailors was held on Saturday, November 12 at the Benderson Park Finish Tower. Over 40 sailors gathered following sailing on a clear day and the tower’s 5th floor provided a spectacular view of the park and as far as downtown Sarasota. A delicious meal catered by Mission BBQ and fellowship, which was enjoyed by al, was followed by an update on the many activities and plans of the park by the Nathan Benderson Park Conservancy President/CEO Stephen Rodriguez. Each of our five fleet captains, or their representative, provided a brief overview of the boats they sail which were also on display. A drawing was held for various prizes and a good time was had by all. Commodore Will Parry and Vice Commodore Bill Schmeising, along with other volunteers, did a great job planning this first of its kind event for our club members.

The club members were sad to learn of the passing of four of our members: Dick “Sherm” Sherman, one of the two founding members of SMYC; Bob Kirkland, a snowbird from Massachusetts; Larry Mendius, originally a snowbird from greater Chicago and then a permanent resident of University Park; and Bob Phelps, a year-round resident of University Park. These four members gave much to SMYC and they will be greatly missed. We will remember them during our Blessing of the Fleet and Time of Remembrance Service in January 2023.

2023

January 2023 was a busy month for SMYC. We welcomed back many snowbirds who enrich our sailing experience each winter. It was good to have them back among us.

January 14 & 15 we hosted the Travelers Tour of DF 65 and DF 95 sailors. Despite some cool temperatures the steady wind provided for some great sailing. Tony Gonzales took home the first-place trophy in the DF 65 competition and our own Peter Feldman took home the first place trophy for the DF 95 class. Many thanks to all the volunteers who made this a great event.

On January 16 Craig Collemer led a Blessing of the Fleet and Time of Remembrance Service for the Laser and DF 65 fleets and on the 17th he led a service for the Soling and DF 95 sailors. During this time we remembers four members who passed on in the past year: Richard “Sherm” Sherman (one of the two founding members of SMYC), Bob Kirkland, Larry Mendius and Bob Phelps.

Awards/Regattas:

“The goal is not to sail the boat, but rather to help the boat sail itself.”
John Rousmaniere

As mentioned throughout this historical record, over the years the club has presented several ongoing awards:

The Commodore's Award – At the annual banquet the Commodore's Award is presented to a sailor who has made a significant contribution to the club during the previous year. This recognition is one of the highlights of the annual banquet. It is interesting to note that the sculpture on the top of the award was designed and made by Howard Garnitz. Howard was an internationally recognized sculptor who studied at the Chicago Academy of Fine Art, the Chicago Art Institute and the University of Illinois. His work has been featured in fine galleries in the United States and abroad and in museum collections such as the New Britain Museum of American Art. Additionally, numerous publications have pictured his works including *National Geographic's America's Spectacular Northwest, Art in Seattle's Public Places*. We are fortunate to have such a special award presented each year. Howard was a club member for several years.

Past recipients of the Commodore's Award are:

- 2004 Bob Nichols
- 2005 Al Sefton
- 2006 Denise Hodgson
- 2007 Jack Norris
- 2008 Jack Norris
- 2009 Trevor Lambert
- 2010 Jerry Callahan
- 2011 Jay Conlon
- 2012 Al Sefton
- 2013 Curt Kasten
- 2014 Jerry Callahan
- 2015 Tim Peat
- 2016 John Stryhn
- 2017 Craig Collemer
- 2018 Nick Morgan
- 2019 Bill Schmeising
- 2020 Jerry Wheeler
- 2021 No award due to Covid-19
- 2022 Al Knezevich

➤ 2023 Don Lippert

Soling Race Director's Most Improved Sailor of the Year Award: This award presented at our annual awards ceremony was initiated by Craig Collemer in 2018. Encouraging sailors to improve their sailing skills is a key component of the Soling fleet's purpose. Recipients of this well-earned award are:

2018 Richard Lomax

2019 Jamie McLane

2020 Award's Dinner cancelled due to Covid-19 Pandemic

2021 Samir Ansary

2022 Dave Cameron

2023 Rich Magner

Al Sefton Most Creative Soling Sailor Award: This award was initiated by Al's family following his death. Al was a member of SMYC for over 22 years, served as commodore and Soling race director. In light of Al's great sense of humor, this award is presented to a sailor who finds a "creative" way to make his/her way around the course. Recipients are:

2021 Bill Schmeising

2022 John Stryhn

2023 Jim Polise

The Soling Skipper of the Month Award – This award is presented each month to the winner of the Soling Skipper of the Month Regatta. Regardless of the fleet any sailor sails in during this regatta, the sailor with the most 1st place finishes wins this award. This award is presented in honor of our first commodore, Jack Norris. In 2015 Nick Morgan made an appropriate case for this award that is passed from recipient to recipient each month.

The Camelot East Regatta: In April 2001, a regatta was held at the lake off Clark Road where the club was sailing at that time. Trophies were awarded to 1st and 2nd place sailors.

The Meadows Regatta Award: For many years The Meadows Regatta has been held in March. The Meadows management has offered to sponsor this regatta with awards presented to the top three finishers in

each fleet. As early as 2004, members of the University Park Soling Club joined our club for this regatta.

Lakewood Ranch Regatta: A regatta was held for several years in the Summerfield section of Lakewood Ranch with a trophy and awards presented.

A Charity Regatta: For the first time, a charity regatta was held in March 2017 to benefit the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation. This regatta is an annual competition between the Snowbirds and the Florida Crackers. The first charity regatta was chaired by Tim Peat who was one of the initiators of this regatta. The trophy for this inaugural event was present to the Snowbirds who sailed to victory under the command of Tim Peat. The club members not only had a great time at this regatta, but a significant bonus was that \$1,676 was raised to benefit The Southwest Florida-Tampa Chapter of the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation.

Hosting Various Regional an National Regattas: Beginning in 2017 we were the host of several National Championship Regattas and Regional Regattas. We have hosted the AMYA national championship regatta for the Victoria and Laser classes. We also hosted the AMYA Region 7 Laser championship and Region 7 IOM championship. We have been invited to host the Soling 1 Meter National Championship Regatta in 2021.

Non-sailing Events:

Twenty years from now, you will be more disappointed by the things you didn't do than those you did. So, throw off the bowlines. Sail from the safe harbor. Catch the wind in your sails. Explore. Dream. Discover."

Mark Twain

Several non-sailing events have evolved over the years that have enriched the experience of club members. Many of these events involve not only the club members, but also spouses and significant others. Here's a sampling of some of these events that have served to provide fellowship and entertainment for all:

- ❖ High Tea at the home of Trevor and Jennifer Lambert in Lakewood

Ranch

- ❖ A luncheon with spouses and significant others was started in 2011 through the efforts of Jerry Callahan. This luncheon has been held at the Whetstone Restaurant at the Manatee Technical College on State Road 70 in Bradenton. This fine dining restaurant is a teaching site for the culinary students at the college and provides excellent meals in an intimate setting.
- ❖ A fun event began in 2014 when Trevor and Jennifer Lambert hosted a potluck supper for club members and spouses/significant others. Such a great time was had by all, John and Patricia Stryhn hosted a potluck supper in March 2015 at their home in Lakewood Ranch with the able assistance of their neighbors, Will and Sue Parry. This was followed by an equally wonderful gathering in February 2016 at the new Lakewood Ranch home of Sue and Will Parry. Eventually, this annual event was moved to the Del Webb community so we could accommodate our growing membership. In 2018 we began holding another potluck supper in September for our year-round members and guests.
- ❖ One of the highlights of the club is the Annual Banquet. This banquet for club members and their spouses and significant others has been held at a variety of local restaurants. At this banquet awards are presented, including the coveted Commodore's Award, the Soling Most Improved Sailor Award, stories are told, a good meal is enjoyed, and a great time is had by all.
- ❖ One of the most enjoyable ongoing events is the after-sailing gathering at a local restaurant (our club has either outgrown or outlasted several different restaurants). This provides an opportunity for the sailors to gather for drinks and refreshments and an occasional lesson on the rules of sailing led by our commodore and other capable sailors. It is at this after sailing gathering that many helpful connections are made among snowbirds and year-round sailors. It is also an opportunity to get

to know new members more readily. These restaurants we use have become our unofficial “club house.”

Sailing On: A Vision for the Future

“My goal in sailing isn’t to be brilliant or flashy in individual races, just to be consistent over the long run.”

Dennis Connor

The Sarasota Model Yacht Club celebrated its 25th anniversary in 2020 and it has been a great 25 years! The current members are in debt to those early visionaries, Dick Sherman and Milt Thrasher, as well as our past and current leadership. Without their love of sailing, dedication, and a vision, the members would not be enjoying the club as we know it today.

Sailing is our reason for coming together, but it is not the only benefit of membership. Making new friends, learning skills and strategies from one another, helping new sailors learn basic skills and the rules of sailing through mentoring, participating in a charity regatta, and enjoying the fellowship offered through non-sailing experiences are just some of the benefits of being a member of the Sarasota Model Yacht Club.

This author has noted that there is probably no other venue for r/c sailing in the country where we can choose from 5 courses on two lakes, have an elevated surface to sail from where we have a unobstructed view of our boats while sailing, can watch Nik Wallenda and his family rehearse for their world-renown high wire acts, attend an amazing circus with some of the best acts from around the world each year, ice skate and slide down a toboggan run in your shorts in Florida’s beautiful weather, and interact with llamas while participating in a regatta. You’ve got to come to our sailing venue at Nathan Benderson Park to see it all happen while we sail.

In conclusion, taking a bit of writer’s prerogative, I would like to suggest that if the club were to have a theme song it would not be one of any number of sailing and maritime themed songs most members would

know. Rather, I would suggest *With a Little Help from My Friends*, for I have found the SMYC to be a group of sailors willing and eager to help the radio-controlled sailing novice learn everything from tuning to boat repairs to the rules of racing to racing strategy. This amazing gathering of sailors who adhere to the Corinthian spirit are pretty remarkable; particularly for a bunch of *Jackwagons*.

Looking to the future, our little club sails on stronger than ever with strong leadership at the helm. We trust future is bright and fair winds will guide us in the years ahead.

APPENDIX

Appendix I: Constitution

Appendix II: Herald Tribune article

Revised 7/15/2020