

## **Sarasota Model Yacht Club A Brief History Record**

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

*Anonymous*

The Sarasota Model Yacht Club (SMYC) started with two individuals in 1996 and evolved into a great sailing club we enjoy today. They both built their own boats and began sailing in a lake behind one of their homes on the south side of Sarasota. They wanted to share their enjoyment with others and invited the Sarasota TV station who filmed them sailing. They began receiving calls that led to additional sailors.

As this group grew, they needed a larger lake on which to sail. They moved to a lake behind the Meadows Shopping Village then to the Meadows Community Center. In 2004, the first dock was built by the Race Director, Al Shefton, who joined the group in 1999. Trevor Lambert also part of the group became the treasurer succeeding the group's first treasurer, Jack Peters. The original dues of \$5.00 when the group started went up to \$10.00 in 2004 to pay for marks and maintain the portable starter. In 2009, the group secured their first countdown starter made by Trevor Lambert.

The club's first governing document (Constitution) was written in 2000 by Sam Montondo. This document outlined a number of requirements including the need for a Race Director, a Board of Directors and other fair play racing rules. The first woman to join the club was in 2004 when Susie Whitmore joined. All and anyone is welcome to join the SMYC.

Many changes and improvements have been made over the years. 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 club's boat or have a boat repaired. John's expertise and willingness to help his fellow sailors have kept many sailors on the water rather than in dry dock. Boatyard maintains an inventory of spare parts for the club. Dues increased to \$20.00. Wind indicators were

purchased. To lessen any potential damage, bumpers were mandated on the bow of all boats.

Thanks to Craig Collemer, the club's mentoring program began in 2015 when several new members needed some assistance to begin sailing and racing. Several members of the University Park Soling Club joined the club. Several club members have donated radio-controlled rescue boats in recent years. They include Dave Kerrigan, Larry Mendius and Marshall Pardey. Rescue boats help with retrieving distressed sailboats. During this time of expansion, the need for improved scoring method became apparent. Nick Morgan was the go-to guy with all score sheets of the day. Nick collated them electronically and placed them into a well-recognized finished product. Nick unexpectedly passed away in 2020. His impact on SMYC cannot be overstated.

A major development for the club came with the agreement between our club and the Suncoast Aquatic Nature Center Associates, Inc (SANCA) which is the operator of the Nathan Benderson Park. The club alternated between the Meadows and the north central lake of Benderson Park depending upon the winds. This Benderson Park Lake was larger and eliminated the trees which created fluky winds at the Meadows. The Meadows still provided protection from sailing in high winds. Volunteers built a couple of docks for the new lake. Since the lake is in clear view of the UTC Mall parking lot, it has attracted people curious about what we were doing. This led to an accelerated increase in our club's membership.

In October 2016, Commodore Curt Kasten announced his desire to retire as Commodore due to some health issues. Curt's leadership served SMYC well for over 6 years in this capacity. 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. The following club members agreed to immediately service in leadership roles:

- Will Parry – Commodore
- Craig Collemer – Vice Commodore & Race Director
- Curt Kasten – Rear Admiral
- Trevor Lambert – Treasurer

## John Stryhn – Board member-at-large

In the following spring, and due to the large number of new sailors, Craig Colemer concentrated all of his time as Race Director. Bill Schmeising agreed to take over the Vice Commodore's position.

As a partnership, SMYC and SANCA have developed a close relationship. SMYC supports Benderson Park's Community Day and their summer camp for young sailors. This is a cooperative effort with the support of the Sarasota County. This new venue has enabled us to sponsor several regattas including an annual charity regatta to raise funds for Cystic Fibrosis.

We found 2020 to be a very significant year in many ways. As of January 1<sup>st</sup>, SMYC became an official affiliate of SANCA. This meant a significant increase in our dues from \$30.00 to \$70.00. In January, we hosted the Region 7 IOM (International One Meter) Championship Regatta. In February, we hosted the Soling Region 7 Championship Regatta.

After 24 years of service as our club treasurer, Trevor Lambert decided it was time to pass the baton to a new treasurer. Al Knezevich took over as treasurer. With the increase in membership and the financial obligation to SANCA as well as other expenses, Al set up a new electronic banking capability where members have the opportunity to pay dues electronically. However, cash and checks are still welcome. As a small start-up Soling club in 1996, SMYC has progressed into a well-recognized RC sailboat club with five different classes of boat. They include the Soling, DF95, DF65, Laser and IOM.

The Covid pandemic shut down racing in early 2020 for a few weeks. In addition, Mote Marine announced their plan to construct a large aquarium and research/educational center on the lake where SMYC sails. As a partner with SANCA, SMYC was offered another lake located on the western fringe of National Benderson property at the corner of Honore Avenue and Athletes Drive. The lake is referred to as the "West Lake" by Benderson Park. SANCA immediately began clearing trees and shrubs around the lakes shores to insure proper winds for sailing. They spent months getting it ready and coordinated their efforts closely with our vice-commodore, Bill Schmeising who worked tirelessly on the

project. SMYC officially began sailing at this new lake in August 2021. SMYC has informally named this lake, Green Parrot Lake, since it is the home of many green parrots.

SMYC Board of Director members now include:

Bill Schmeising – Commodore  
Rob Wucki – Vice Commodore / DF65 Fleet Director  
Al Knezevich – Treasurer  
Craig Collemer – Soling Fleet Director / Chaplin  
Bill Hendrickson – DF95 Fleet Director  
Steve Lippincott – Laser Fleet Director  
John Stryhn – IOM Fleet Director

SMYC maintains a very detailed historical record thanks to the efforts of Craig Collemer, a SMYC Board of Director Member, Soling Fleet Captain and club Chaplin. Members are encouraged to read it to fully appreciate the work, evolution and development invested into the success of the Sarasota Model Yacht Club.