

THE BAGPIPE

THE 31st YEAR OF THE THISTLE

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Richard Klein Photo

Bob White (124), Victorious in a Fleet of 66

Feature: 1977 National Championship Regatta

THE BAGPIPE
Journal
of the
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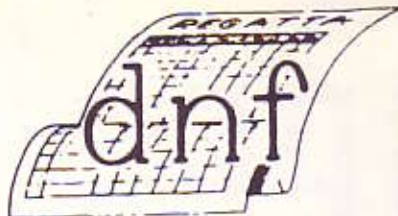
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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor,

In answer to Fuller Moore's article in the May-June 1977 issue of the Bagpipe I would like to express my views on the subject and clarify some of the points Fuller mentioned.

During the first few months as President of the Class, I received phone calls concerning "token ownership". By area there were two from San Diego, one from Long Island, two from Houston. All concerned persons who desired to sail in our chevron events without really owning a Thistle. Each was referred to as a "Classhopper" really just interested in racing in a quality regatta in their neighborhood. Hence, it appeared we need stronger language in our rules to further reduce "token ownership." At the Midwinter GB meeting we approved unanimously the new wording which in essence added a time factor for a co-owner as a requirement for competing in a chevron event. This rule was published in a letter sent out to the Fleet Captains, DG's and RVP's ten days after the Midwinters. From that point on and after 8000 miles on the regatta circuit Fuller Moore's article was the first word of dissent. In my travels, the people I visited with thought the revision to be a good one. I received no letters or calls against it. This policy in its original form is considered to be one of the "cornerstone stones" in our class and one of the reasons we have 55% of all Thistles ever built still active. Secondly, it helps from an administrative viewpoint in compilation of eligibility lists for chevron events, especially districts and thirdly "token ownership" doesn't give us long

term growth. Our class thrives on true ownership and participation. That's why at the Nationals we were able to count second and third generation Thistlers. I was unable to count second and third generation "Classhoppers"—Enough for the rule itself.

In Fuller's article he stated we are becoming a closed fraternity. I agree, but no more so than any other association that has requirements for entrance and participation. A college, yacht club, architectural society, i.e. all are closed fraternities. Fraternities are just groups who have something they believe in and desire to share as long as you play by their rules. We welcome any sailor as long as he desires to play according to our rules and meets our membership requirements. No one in this Class is trying to preserve his niche by restricting "classhoppers". Look at the depth of competition in the class. It is as good, if not the best in America. We are not running this class to host a Champion of Champions Regatta or *only* for the 100 or so owners who race in the Nationals. If you desire this kind of competition (only the top 5-10% in the nation) then find yourself another class—no better yet just race against what's here—we have the best.

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the skipper's meeting

FROM THE PRESIDENT

We are proud to have as our new National Champion, Bobby White (124), who has been an outstanding competitor in our class for years. The competitive spirit and sportsmanship that Bobby and the Gillilands demonstrated in their quests for the Championship is unparalleled. We are indebted to these fine people, who symbolize and maintain such high standards of competitiveness and sportsmanship.

After eight straight years of holding an office (Fleet Captain, District Governor, 2nd V.P., 1st V.P. and President) in the Class, 1978 will be a major change for me. I have enjoyed these eight years, and for that matter, all twelve years I have been a Thistler. Someone asked me at the Nationals what I intend to do with all my extra time, and my reply was, "I intend to learn to race my Thistle."

In leaving office, I would like to thank the people who assisted me in performing my duties as President. They have worked hard and have put in many long hours to accomplish the goals we set for ourselves at Association Island. Larry Gaenzle, Tom Keinath, Marlin Abramson and Honey Abramson, thank you so much. For guidance during my term, I thank Charlie Steigerwald; he helped me over many rough spots. And to all the people who have helped me over the years, please accept my sincere thanks. It certainly has been a pleasure to serve this class over the years, and I would do it all over again.

Naturally, like any other organization, we have opportunities, challenges, and problems. The leadership is strong and dedicated to keeping the Class one-design and thriving. I have the utmost confidence and trust in their abilities, as each has been successful in his own right. We are fortunate to have them.

In going back a year to Association Island, when the new officers sat down to determine our objectives and goals, we all agreed that things looked pretty good and our game plan was to consolidate and strengthen the Class. The goals we set were: to outline specifically the duties of RVP's and DG's; to further define the details of the boat to provide the builders with guidelines; to solve the spreader problem that led to so many mast breakings; to stress growth; to seek

publicity; to improve our communications; and to administer the Class in accordance with the Constitution and By-Laws.

Reflecting on these goals, we accomplished most of them. Marlin Abramson defined the materials to be used for spreaders, and mast breakage has declined to a near-acceptable level. There are other reasons for masts breaking, which Bill Scharenberg's recent article pointed out. On the point of mast breakage, I would like to clarify what has been generally misunderstood about the new mast. When it was presented to the Class, it was not presented as indestructible—no mast is (an old aluminum mast failed just recently). What was promised was a mast nearly equal to the old wood mast, without its breakage problem and a more standard performance from day to day. In development, the spreader was not considered, but the mast was just as promised. Now that the spreader problem has been defined, the Class has the mast it voted for.

The details of the boat's rigging have been defined to give the builders the needed guidance in what we desire to prevent under-rigging or overstressing the boat (See Chief Measurer's ruling passed at the Midwinters). The rudder has been specified at an eight pound minimum to reduce breakage or the unusual building of light rudders.

The most disappointing aspect of our goals was in growth. We held our own over last year with some areas gaining and some declining. Growth is not a one year thing, but a long-term pull. It is not just the responsibility of the officers but of everyone who enjoys ownership of a Thistle. Growth can only happen at the fleet level and only with those who show real enthusiasm. (Incidentally, why not give your crew a Christmas present this year of an Associate Membership in the Class—especially young crew members. This gives them their own copy of the Bagpipe and makes them part of the Class for only \$8.00). Minimal growth cannot be blamed on other classes, swing-keel boats, or club policy—these are excuses and I can prove it. Growth

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MEASURER'S MEMO

In my first article as Chief Measurer, I expressed my feelings about the Thistle and the people who make it a great class. I also indicated my thoughts about our particular one-design philosophy: "Thistles are to be equal in their ability to win a race. The real determining factor should be the skill of the crew."

Just after publication, a letter arrived from my West Coast friend, Ralph Kelley. He challenged me by stating that there has been development in the Class and that only properly-cared-for Thistles are competitive. This was his premise and it is one with which I agree. There have been many changes which were covered in that first article, changes that have made it possible to sail the boat closer to its potential speed, that have made it easier to handle and that have made it simpler to maintain. It is also true

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