



THE MAINSHEET



Vol. 34 No. 2

February, 2005

Cheney Lake, Kansas

From The ~~Commodore~~

Everything appears to slow down at the lake at this time of the year but this perception may not always be as it seems. While the lake is frozen and things are put away, there are forces at work preparing for the coming year. For the last two sessions the BOG has been hard at work assembling the budgets for the coming season. Everything needs attention; the time has come for serious work on the slips, there will be at least two high profile national regattas this year, the fortieth anniversary of the Club will be this summer, there is some activity planned for every week. Luckily for us we have dedicated, talented members hard at work to make these things happen.

The Tom Thorp Memorial Committee has been planning an expansion of the upper deck of the Afterdeck building which will greatly enhance this facility for years to come. You will be hearing much more about this in the near future.

For those of you who missed this year's Superbowl at the Afterdeck Sunday night, that's too bad, Gregg and Cindy Greenwood hosted a superb party and you missed Andy Woodward's mild, hot & vegetarian chili. It was a cozy evening with good friends and a roaring fire.

I get many calls and e-mails from members with ideas and offers of assistance in projects for this coming year, I'm always impressed by their kindness and generosity. And for you Lovers: Happy Valentine's!



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This is an idea of what the proposed Tom Thorp Memorial Afterdeck deck extension will look like.

Tom Thorp, and the Afterdeck

Our friend and long time NSA member, Tom Thorp, loved sailing, NSA, and he especially loved the Afterdeck. In his memory, an expansion to the deck on the north (chimney) side of the building is proposed.

With Board approval, a committee has been formed to design, separately fund, and construct a deck expansion in the general area over the current patio area. An approximately 20 foot by 60 foot expansion would allow for outside dining and entertaining as well as informal gathering; and would include a staircase, electrical outlets, and lighting. Early estimates show it would cost about

\$20,000, and although there is lots to do, we are hoping for a mid-summer completion date.

Please give serious thought to any features you would like to see in a deck, and let Gregg Greenwood or Andy Woodward know. In a few days, you will receive a letter from the funding committee, explaining some preliminary aspects of the design. The letter will also request you seriously consider a generous donation to the project in Tom's name. A few days later, you will receive a follow-up phone call.

The Committee really appreciates the interest shown so far, and is looking forward to your continued support of the project.

Board of Governors Meeting

Ninnescah Sailing Association
Minutes of Board of Governors Meeting
Thursday, February 3, 2005

Present: Jim Carlisle, Neil Carlsen, Mike Mason, Pat Adams, Jim Honeyman, Rich Shull, Kevin Findley, Alan Huffman, John Curfman, Allen Johnson, Jennifer Corley, Mark Reeves, and Nancy Reeves.

Meeting called to order at 7:00 p.m. at Quincy's Bar and Grill, 2047 N. West St.

Secretary (Shull):

- Minutes of 1-6-05 meeting were approved as published.
- Regatta Insurance policy received and on file.
- Register of American Yacht Clubs 2005 Reciprocity Guide containing NSA's listing received and on file. Most clubs in the U.S and Virgin Islands are listed alphabetically and by State. A listing of registered clubs is available at their website www.ycaol.com. You can order your own guide off the website, or contact Rich Shull for specifics on any club or all the clubs in any State.

Administrative Secretary (Johnson):

- Most members' dues have been received.
- A list of unpaid members was distributed. A late fee of \$53.15 is required with all delinquent dues. Please submit your payment plus the late fee before the March 3, 2005 Board meeting or be subject to losing slip, yard space and other preferred benefits.
- Membership list will be complete soon so committee assignments can be made.
- **Slip exchange meeting at the Afterdeck, March 6, 2005 at 2:00 pm.**

Treasurer (Curfman):

- Financial report submitted and discussed.
- Several questions were dealt with in anticipation of drafting final budget.
- Report approved as submitted.

Property Manager (Adams):

- Nothing to report.
- Eagles are still present at the club.

Commodore Elect (Huffman):

- **Navigation class** has been **rescheduled** due to conflict of instructor and desire to wait until latest revised course material available. New dates are **March 12 & 13**. Classes will take place at the Afterdeck from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm each day. Class size is limited, so if you're interested, contact Alan Huffman as soon as possible.

Member/guest forum:

- Jennifer Corley asked the board for direction on handling the registration funds and expenditures for the Opti Great Plains Championship Regatta, June 8 thru 11.
- Board authorized Jennifer to establish a separate account for receipt and expenditure of funds so that expense payment can be expedited.

- She also asked for directions regarding the use of the coach boat at the four out of town youth regattas. Tim Fitzgerald has agreed to coach the team and will be using the boat for team coaching at those events.

- Board approved the use and directed Tim and other team leaders to coordinate boat use with the property manager.

Vice Commodore (Findley):

- Board approved the purchase of a new electronic compass and proper flag set for the committee boat.

- Regatta schedule has been finalized and submitted to CSSA for publication.

- Special thanks given to Scott Mathia and the Hobie Fleet for graciously moving their annual Prairie Regatta to a later date to avoid a conflict.

- The regatta teams of NSA and Walnut Valley will be a combined effort with Tim Fitzgerald as coach. The clubs will conduct separate youth sailing camps.

- The dates for the NSA camp are set, but the instructor isn't confirmed yet.

Operations (Mason):

- **Bonfire Party** will be **March 12** at the shelter house, please make arrangements to attend.

- The plans are nearing completion on the deck expansion to be funded by the Thorp Memorial fund. Fund raising effort to begin soon. Cost will be in the neighborhood of \$20,000.00

Yardmaster (Carlsen):

- Yards and boats all ok, but storm clean up needs to be done before grass starts to grow.

- **A volunteer storm clean up day** is planned for **Saturday February 19, at 9:00 am**, please come out to help if you can.

- More electrical outlets will be placed in the yards this season.

Harbormaster (Honeyman):

- Winter storage fees and necessity of a bubbler for each boat left in the water over the winter months discussed.

- Slip assignment issues also discussed.

- Board referred both issues to the Long Range Planning Committee for consideration.

- Slip fingers on D and E slips will be replaced by steel framed fingers as budget permits, followed by replacement of center sections. The process will take two or three years.

Past Commodore (Kearby): Not present.

Commodore (Carlisle):

- All club records are going to be gathered and kept at the Afterdeck.

- Current file cabinet with secretary's records will be moved to the lake soon.

- If anyone has any club records or documents that might have historical value to the club, feel free to get them to Commodore or Secretary for filing.

- Kansas Senate Bill 87 was discussed. It provides funding for the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks by adding a \$5 fee to each vehicle registration, and elimi-

- 2 nates the annual park fees we all now pay for each auto.



Board of Governors Meeting (cont.)

- The board then discussed the budget for 2005. Final figures were determined and will be turned over to Mary Kearby to put into a spreadsheet for final consideration at the March Board meeting.

- **March Board of Governors meeting** will be held at **Quincy's Bar and Grill, 2047 N. West St., Thursday March 3, 2005** at 7:00 pm.

- The monthly Board breakfast will be Tuesday, February 15 at 6:15 am at the Beacon Restaurant at 909 E. Douglas.

Meeting Adjourned at 9:15.

Ninnescah Sailing Association & Central States Sailing Association

2005 Regatta Calendar

January	8	Area F Meeting	OCBC (U)
April	23-24	Dogwood Regatta (Open)	TCS (S)
May	14-15	Hobock/Tillotson Memorial Spring Open	WSC (S)
	28-29	J-24 Texas Circuit	NSA
	30	Memorial Day Regatta	NSA
June	4-5	Bemis Trophy (Club 420)	Galveston Bay
	4	Hummfest Regatta (Open)	COSA (A)
	8-9	USODA National Team Clinic (Optimist)	NSA (O)
	10-11	USODA Great Plains Regatta (Optimist)	NSA (O)
	18	Jr.Circuit #1	WSC (J)
	25-26	San Juan 21 North Americans	NSA (O)
	25-26	Lighthouse Charity Regatta	OCBC (C)
July	4	Colossus Cup Regatta	NSA
	8-10	Catalina 25 Nationals	NSA (O)
	9	Junior Circuit #2	WSC (J)
	16-17	Prairie Regatta (Hobie Cat Fleet 27)	NSA (O)
	23-24	White Cap Regatta (Open)	NSA (S)
	30-31	Junior Circuit #3	WVSC (J)
August	6-7	Mad Dogs & Englishmen's Regatta (Open)	COSA (A)
	13-14	Junior Championships	WSC (J)
	27-28	Cat Chase (Hobie Cat Fleet 27)	NSA (A)
September	3-4	C.O.R.N Regatta (One-Design)	NSA (A)
	10	MS Regatta (Open)	WSC (C)
	24-25	R.O.C.K Regatta (One-Design)	Kaw City, OK (A)
October	1	K.I.S.S Regatta (Single-Handed)	WSC (A)
	22-23	Frostbite Regatta (Open)	WSC (S)
November	5	CSSA Directors Annual Meeting	TSC (U)
	7	Hiram Douglas Regatta	TSC (A)

The Ninnescah Sailing Association is hosting all events in bold type.

If you would like to help during these events please contact Kevin Findley at 316-744-6788.

Legend: (A) Affiliated, (C) Charity (S) Sanctioned, (J) Junior, (U) Meeting, (O) Other

COSA/Central Oklahoma Sailing Association, TSC/Thunderbird Sailing Club, **Flt.27/Hobie Cat Fleet 27**, WSC/Windycerest Sailing Club, NSA/Ninnescah Sailing Association, OCBC/Oklahoma City Boat Club, WVSC/Walnut Valley Sailing Club

Dear friends:

A new Bill (Kansas Senate Bill 87) has been introduced in the State Senate which will greatly impact the Park Division at Cheney Lake as well as Ninnescah Sailing Association. This Bill deals with the way the State collects funds which are used to finance State Park operations and maintenance. I urge you to write, e-mail or call your Legislator and voice your support. This must be done right away as hearings are scheduled for February 9 or 10. Annual costs for driving into the Park have been going up each year and are scheduled to go up again this year. If this Bill passes our guests would not have to pay to enter the Park just to come sailing with us. This Bill proposes that every Kansan would pay a \$5 "outdoor recreation registration fee" on their annual vehicle registration fees for the use of all State Parks, and no daily user fee would then be collected at the Parks.

Jim Carlisle, Commodore NSA

notices:

* **Afterdeck Reservations**

If you are interested in reserving the Afterdeck for NSA activities or renting the facility for a private function, please contact Past Commodore Mary Kearby via e-mail (marykearbey@swbell.net), or phone (316-677-4559).

* **E-mail MAINSHEET**

Remember, the E-mail issue of the *MAINSHEET* usually arrives at your computer on the Tuesday following the Thursday BOG meeting. It is in color, and you can still print out your own copy if you wish. Every e-mail subscription we enlist will save the NSA time and money that we can use for other projects, and it will help keep your dues from increasing more.

* **Yard Spaces**

Yard spaces are for boats and trailers only! Lock the gates when you are the last to leave, and put your name on your boat trailer.

* **March Bonfire Party**

March Bonfire Party is Saturday, March 12.

* **Dr. Thorp Deck Memorial**

The Dr. Thorp Deck Memorial planning meeting is Sunday, February 6, at 2:00 P.M. It is the second meeting of the group. Careful cost analysis indicates about \$20,000 is needed to complete deck, electrical, lighting, memorial plaque, and some additional concrete work to complement the project.

* **Slip Exchange Meeting**

The slip exchange meeting will be Sunday March 6th at 2:00 PM at the Afterdeck.

* **Ice Damage Cleanup Party**

There is going to be an all volunteer cleanup party to repair winter ice damage to the grounds Saturday, February 19th at 9:00 AM. Meet Patrick at the Afterdeck.

WELCOME ABOARD



Ivan & Bev Murphy
2531 S. Washington
Wichita, KS 67216
246 0694
J-24

Jon & Bette Zehnder
2584 13th Avenue
Lindsborg, KS 67456
(785) 227-3513
Chrysler 22

And from Operations - Mike Mason

By the time you read this, the Super Bowl party will be history, and as I'm writing this, it is yet to come. I hope you had a good time if you attended and that you are anxious for the other events of the year to roll around. It's time to look to your boats and get on with the new season!

Our next event will be the March Bonfire Party and Picnic. It will be held on the point beginning around 6:30 P.M. on Saturday March 12. You will need to make reservations for this by calling me at 316-722-0207 or emailing me at masonrochelle@aol.com. Be sure to include your phone number and name if you get the answering machine. I like to confirm all reservations. The cost will be seven dollars a person. Make your reservations before midnight, March 10.

We will be grilling thick juicy hamburgers and brats and serving them with all the trimmings. We'll also have coleslaw, baked beans, and pie. Tea and coffee will be available. If you want other, bring it. Dress for the weather and pray that my luck is still with us. Don't you just love contemplating spring!

From the Editors:

Please note the deadline schedule:

- Announcements of scheduled events (such as dinners and races), ads, and any items that need to be typed must be received by Thursday, March 3rd.
- Only items on IBM formatted discs or e-mail will be accepted until 6:00 p.m Monday, March 7th.
- Any late material will be published the next month.**

Bring or mail your material to the Editors, Mark Reeves and Mike Kilmer at 3240 Country Club, Wichita, KS 67208, (316-685-7425), fax it to Nancy at (316)265-8708, **or E-mail it to: nreeves@cox.net**
(E-mail is actually the favored choice, since the material does not have to be scanned into the computer.)



JUNIOR SAILING



JUNIOR SAILING GREAT PLAINS CHAMPIONSHIP REGATTA

In case you had forgotten, this Junior Sailing event will include two-day clinics for newcomers and for experienced sailors 14 years and younger, followed by a two-day regatta. The clinics are scheduled for **June 9 & 10** and the regattas for **June 11 & 12**. McLaughlin (manufacturer of Optimist Dinghies) will be in attendance with charter boats for participants, and KO Sailing is providing equipment. The top 25% of participants will earn an invitation to compete at Team Trials. This regatta is expected to draw at least 50 sailors from the around the USA and has been created especially for the NSA by the USODA.

All of the Committee Chairperson positions have been filled, but now we need people who are willing to come and help-out in the following areas:

- ***Information Booth/Regatta Office** on one or more days June 9, 10, 11 and 12
[contact **Vic Carter, 733-3534, Vcarter3@cox.net**]
- ***Traffic Control** on one or more days June 9, 10, 11 and 12
[contact **Texie Randle, 729-6358, brandle1@cox.net**]
- ***Social Event Helpers** on June 11
[contact **Viki Cheatum, 838-7699, VCC@aol.com**]
- ***Bring and operate Spectator Boats** (can be motor boat or sailboat) on June 11 and 12
[contact **Mike Graham, 773-3580, MEGraham@cessna.textron.com**]
- ***Bring and operate Safety Boats** (should be a motor boat) on June 11 and 12
[contact **Mike Graham, 773-3580, MEGraham@cessna.textron.com**]

For **additional information** on the regatta and ways you can help to support our Junior Sailing Program, contact the event chairperson, **Lori Graham, 773-3580, GrahamConsulting@cox.net**.

“Women’s Sleepover”

First ever sleepover at the Afterdeck Friday,
February 25th at 7:00p.m.
Women only!!

Bring Soup or Salad or Desert for dinner. We will supply Dishes and some pop. Continental Breakfast will be served February 26th. Bring your sleeping bags, Movies and games.

Joan Gibson 620-663-5572 rgibson5185@sbcglobe.net

American Sailing Association
Coastal Navigation Course 105

Two full Days, March 12 and 13

Instructor: Debbie Graham - Island Fever Sailing School - Grand Lake, Oklahoma

Here's your chance to get an ASA certified course righthere in Wichita!!!

This course includes home study materials and two days of classroom instruction in coastal navigation, concluding with the certification exam, which will qualify you as an ASA certified sailor in the area of coastal navigation. Some of the things covered include:

Chart symbols	Use of compass, binoculars, hand bearing compas, dividers, parallel rule, depth sounder
Use of tide tables	Charting a course of at least 20 miles with 3 course changes
Compas deviation	Shapes, colors, and lights used in the buoyage system
Notice to Mariners	Terms and characteristics of lighted navigation aids
Sources of officail publications	Ways to plot a position from terrestrial objects
True, magnetic, and compas course	Allowing for effect of current and leeway
How to plot a dead reckoning position	And lots more

Class will be held from 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM both days, location to be determined based on class size. Study materials will be sent directly to you upon receipt of your check to NSA for the bargain price of \$250! Send your checks to NSA, PO Box 1587, Wichita, KS 67202.

Deadline for signup is February 10, 2005- But hurry the enrollment is limited.

for further information contact Alan Huffman, (316)264-1866 or ahuffman@keymgmt.com

Meet Your Board



Rich Shull - Secretary

Occupation: Judge
Wife: Carla
Four sons: grown and moved out.

Built first boat, a 14 footer resembling a Lightning while in college. Started sailing at Shawnee Yacht Club in Topeka in 1967. Owned and raced C-Scows there against the likes of Dick Prokup, Buddy Melges (Scow builder), Iver Johnson (Scow builder) and the Bowers brothers (sail makers) before any of them were rich and world famous

(well, Prokup was rich). Raced J-24's from late seventies until Schoen Fitzgerald bought the boat from Al Fenwick. Currently sail a Pearson 26 (since 1985).

Joined Ninneseah Yacht Club in 1971. Served as first social chairman and created yearbook with Bill Morris and served as chairman or co-chairman of both committees for several years. Club Secretary in 1976 and Commodore in 1977. Liaison with State Park and Corp. of Engineers from 1977 to 1987 (now done by the PR committee). Co-chair with John Mosley for the committee that acquired the federal matching funds (matched by club funds) to build the shower building and upgrade the park's water and sewer system to serve that building, the club and the west park area.

Served as Principal Race officer for Tornado Cat Nationals in 1977, followed by the Sol Cat Nationals, Catalina 22 Nationals and others. Served on race committee for Fireball Nationals, Finn nationals and many other major regattas whenever Phil Mellor, Jim Beddow, Ed Webb or Jim Pierce called or couldn't serve.

When I joined the Club, Jim Pierce was in high school, Andy Woodard was a railroad engineer selling Clipper 26's out of a garage on east 1st street (he ultimately hired Guy McCormick and Marvin Reimer to help, causing the eventual closing of the business). There were no trees, or slips. The small boat cove was too shallow for boats except where the ramp and guest dock are near the shelter house. There were a few keelboats and twin keelers kept on moorings. The rest were Fireballs, Rhodes Bantams, Scows, FJ's, Hobies, Nacras, Prindles, Starfish, Sunfish, and Lasers.

In the years since 1971, we've dredged the small boat cove twice and the area for slips D and E when the water was low. We've built five sets of slips (some more than once), constructed a crane, built the shower building and Afterdeck and developed one of the finest sailing facilities in Midwest. While we've maintained a respectable reputation as a racing center, we've also become a major marina for large cruisers.



What's So Great About Sailing?

By Matt Graham, NSA Jr. Sailor

I am from Wichita, Kansas and 14 years old. In the middle of wheat fields, I found a life enriching sport... Sailing! With sailing, I've learned to think on my own, and to communicate well with everyone, especially adults. Many of my friends at school think I'm a loner, but what I've found in sailing is Gold. Sailing is not just a sport or something to keep me occupied, it trains in me life skills to become a great man and a great American.

Life Skill 1 – Honesty, Humility and Graciousness are part of good sportsmanship. In sailing, there are no referees to make sure cheating doesn't happen. Each sailor is expected to be honest and when he or she breaks a rule, they are expected to take their own penalty. It takes humility to accept it when you break the rules then make it right. The graciousness in sailing happens at the end of every day. When the racing is over, every sailor supports the winner, even when it hurts. The best sportsmen/sportswomen in sailing end up with life-long friends from all over the world.

Life Skill 2 – Dream big, and when you do, you will have to work really hard to achieve that dream, especially if you are the underdog. I started sailing when I was 7 years old, when there were not many kids sailing com-

petitively around Kansas. When I learned how far I could go in sailing, my dream was formed, but I had to find other ways to get there than what my competition has available to them. Most kids I sail against belong to big, wealthy yacht clubs that have year-around sailing coaches on staff. I was the "underdog".

My dream is to represent the USA in an International regatta as a member of the US National Team. This winter, I made it! I was invited to join Team USA in Italy in March, 2005. It took a lot of hard work, determination and my Home Team for me to achieve this honor. Most of the hard work took place off the water.

To make the big competitions, I had to travel more than most (no major competitions are in Kansas). I also had to hire coaches at those competitions. This meant lots of money, but Mom and Dad didn't hand it to me on a silver plate. I had to earn most of the money. Since no business will hire someone under the age of 16, I found other ways. I work year-around mowing lawns, throwing 600 newspapers, babysitting, painting house numbers on curbs, and selling cookie dough. It makes enough to help pay for these regattas, but no where near enough to pay for my dream... Italy.

Life Skill 3 – Even when you are in an "individual" sport, it still takes a "Home Team" to succeed. Just like NASCAR drivers and Lance Armstrong have home teams, I have and need a

home team also. My family spends a lot of time and money supporting me when I travel to regattas. At these competitions, they also make sure I have a coach to teach me sailing skills, they help me with my equipment, and they make sure I learn life skill #1... good sportsmanship.

This dream I have of representing the USA means more to me than to most teenagers, as my father was an F/A-18 pilot in Desert Storm. I know first-hand the sacrifice it takes from the whole family. It takes more than just the pilot in the cockpit to fly the jets. It takes every American to be on the Home Team to get him trained in not only flying and fighting, but most importantly to have the life skills necessary to make the right decisions at the right time.

Now that I have the honor of representing the USA, I hope I can do so as honorably as my dad did in the US Navy. To do so, I need your help. Will you be on my Home Team? Any amount you can donate would be great. It's tax-deductible, too! I have an account through US Sailing (the same organization the Olympic sailors use for their donations). 5% of your donation will go to US Sailing as an administration fee. The rest will go to pay for my regatta expenses. Make the check payable to USSF and designate it for the "Matt Graham Optimist account". The address is United States Sailing Foundation; 15 Maritime Drive; PO Box 1260; Portsmouth, RI 02871.

2005 N.S.A. Social Events

*March Bonfire Party and Picnic,	March 12, 6:00 P.M.
April Covered Dish Social,	April 16, 6:00 P.M.
*Memorial Day Dinner, Sunday,	May 29, 6:30 P.M.
40 th Anniversary of the Club, Saturday,	June 18,
Blessing of the fleet at 4:00 P.M.,	
June Block Party at 6:30	
*Independence Eve Party, Sunday,	July 3, 6:30 P.M.
Commodore's Pancake Feed,	July 4, 8:00-10:00 A.M.
Progressive Dinner, Saturday,	August 6, 6:30 P.M.
August Block Party, Saturday,	August 20, 6:30 P.M.
*Labor Day Weekend Party, Sunday,	September 4, 6:30 P.M.
*October Low Country Boil and Bonfire, Saturday,	October 1, 6:30 P.M.
Annual Meeting and Covered Dish Dinner, Sunday,	November 6, 2:00 P.M.
*Holidays Party, Saturday,	December 3, 7:00 P.M.

*These events require reservations to be made with Mike Mason, by e-mail at masonrochelle@aol.com, or by phone at 316-722-0207. Reservations must be made at least three days prior to the event. Payment should be made at the event. All reservations will be acknowledged if you leave your name and phone number, and ignored if you don't.

Murder Mystery Benefit for Matt Graham

Presented By:
Wyldeewood Cellars Winery
Big Mike's Little Theater



Please join us for a FUN evening with friends and family and help send Matt Graham to Lake Garda, Italy. Matt recently earned a spot with 9 other sailors from around the United States to sail on Team USA. He needs to raise \$5,000 to pay for his regatta, coach, uniform and travel expenses.

DATE: 02/18/05
\$40 PER PERSON

Matt sails the Optimist sailboat, pictured below. He is one of only 10 of the best sailors from around the USA who are invited to compete in this regatta.



Please come to support Matt in representing the United States at this spectacular international event.

**Purchase Tickets
From Matt Graham
773-3580**

**Includes
Wine & Cheese Tasting,
4-Course Dinner,
Dessert, and
Murder Mystery Show**



Start Line at Lake Garda, Italy

Simple Man, Simple Boat

By Bill Douglas

Fifty years ago in Clearwater, Florida, Clark Mills designed and built the first Optimist Pram. Re-christened the International Optimist Dinghy, 300,000 are now being sailed by children in over 105 countries around the world. Mills has become the father of the largest, and the most truly international, of all international classes.

"All this publicity is gonna give me a big head!" laughs the 82 year old Mills. He puffs up his cheeks and gestures with his hands to show a swelling head, but his humor proves otherwise.

Growing up in Clearwater, Mills learned to love boats and the water. He still reveres the Florida west coast. "It was beautiful back then," he reminisces. "Beautiful." He closes his eyes, remembering back 70 years. "I sailed everywhere around here. There's not a square foot of Clearwater Bay that I haven't capsized in."

Mills began building boats as a young man, then worked in Philadelphia during World War II as a boat builder for the U.S. Navy. "I hated the cold and begged 'em to send me any place south. Someone in the Navy with a sense of humor decided they'd fix my complaining, so they sent me to Panama. But I loved it down there. Warm weather suits me fine. I work best with a little mist under my arms."

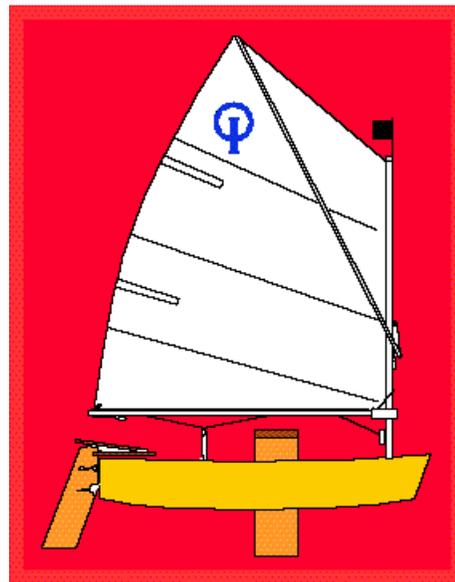
Returning after the war to live in Clearwater, Mills became a well-known and respected designer and builder. He built boats—lots of boats. Snipes, Lightnings, and a flotilla of custom boats cruised away from his Dunedin loft. A later Clark Mills design, the Windmill, became a well-known and very popular class. But back in 1946, his most renowned design, the Optimist, was still a dream away.

Mills balks at accepting credit for his most popular boat. "That's something that's always ticked me off," says Mills. (He's a sailor, so he doesn't actually say, "ticked.") "Whenever people write about the Optimist, they give me

all the credit. Heck, I didn't do anything but draw up the design. The folks who came up with the idea, they're the ones who really got the ball rolling. Give them the credit."

Soon after the war's end, the idea of commissioning a small sailboat which children could learn to sail and race was raised by a civic organization, the Clearwater Optimist Club. This club actively embraced the motto of their parent organization, Optimists International—"Friend of the Youth". Their mission was shared with Optimist clubs worldwide—to develop programs benefiting the children of their community.

Ernie Green, an Optimist club member and an early proponent of a children's sailboat, was stymied by other members who were determined—



despite Clearwater's totally flat terrain—to instead promote racing in soap box derby cars, or "orange crate specials." Green tried several tacks, all unsuccessful, to promote the sailing idea, even proposing a children's regatta called "The Orange Crate Regatta."

Mills has his own view of these events. "In any club, there are always a few people with good ideas, the doers, really gung ho. And then there are the bald-headed idiots who stand up in the back of the room and tell the doers that their ideas stink." Clearly, Clark Mills has no use for the "bald-headed idiots" whose resistance delayed the launching of the first Optimist.

Enter Major Clifford McKay, to whom Mills gives much of the credit for

the development of the Optimist. "McKay was a mover and a shaker and a shouter. He was a Rotary Club man and a good speaker. He urged the Optimist men to build a children's boat."

McKay's enthusiasm for the project, together with Green's lobbying, won some converts, but McKay knew he needed something dramatic to launch wavering club members into action. He sought Clark Mills help. "McKay didn't tell me much. He just said to design a children's sailboat. It had to cost no more than \$50 and be simple enough to build at home."

Mills started sketching and soon ran into a basic limitation. "Plywood was the problem. It comes in eight foot sheets. I could special order it ten feet long, but that cost a fortune, so I knew the boat had to be less than eight feet. Since it was hard to put a pointed bow in an eight foot boat, I made it a pram." So the size and shape of the world's largest class was dictated by the dimensions of a sheet of plywood and by McKay's \$50 budget. Mills chose a sprit rig, to allow some shape in the poorly designed, often home-sewn sails of the era.

Mills vividly recalls the very first Optimist hull. "It wasn't pretty, because Major McKay wanted it fast, for the next Optimist Club meeting. I hammered it together in a day and a half with 10 penny galvanized nails, slapped on a coat of paint, and called her an 'Optimist Pram.' We rigged her up in the hotel lobby where the Optimist Club met."

The club's members were amazed at how quickly the boat had gone from dream to dinghy. "They didn't know that McKay had hired the world's fastest, skinniest, hungriest boat builder," laughs Mills. His prototype converted even the soapbox derby car advocates. The year was 1947 and the design was a hit.

The Optimist Club promoted the boat, selling plans at cost—about \$2.50. A fleet of Optimists with young skippers were soon racing on Clearwater Bay. Other fleets quickly followed, in Dunedin and at Pass-A-Grille Yacht Club, on what is now St. Pete Beach. St. Petersburg and Miami weren't far behind. Although the Clearwater Optimist Club has been defunct for many years, it well deserves historical recog-

Simple Man, Simple Boat - (cont)

inition for breathing wind onto the sails of the original Optimist.

The world's first Optimist skipper was Clifford McKay, Jr., Major McKay's son. "He must have been about 11. We launched the first boat on Clearwater Bay in a good breeze. Clifford handled the boat well and had a great time."

It took 1 1/3 sheets of plywood to build an Optimist. With careful layout, Mills could cut three boats from four sheets. For bulkheads and other structures, he used juniper, spruce, or large pole pine. He glued things up with resorcinol glue and used bronze nails for fasteners.

The Optimist was mainly a Florida phenomenon until 1958, when Axel Damgaard, the captain of a Danish tall ship, visited the United States and was inspired by the design. With Mills' permission, he took an Optimist back to Europe, modified it, and renamed it the International Optimist Dinghy. The IOD had a battened sail and much simplified running rigging. The new design spread quickly, first through Europe then all around the world.

Its acceptance in the U.S., however, was far from immediate. In returning to U.S. shores, the IOD collided with a large, established fleet of Optimist Prams. The Pram's well anchored popularity stemmed from its low cost and ease of home construction—aided by building tolerances far more lenient than the tight scantlings of the IOD.

As more and more IODs landed on the shores of the U.S., regattas were scheduled for both Prams and IODs. As late as 1985, separate regattas were held for both boats. Many sailors from the 1970s and 1980s owned two boats,

to sail in both types of regattas.

In the early 1980s, the scales were tipping in favor of the IOD. The number of Prams steadily declined and, by the mid 1980s, Pram racing opportunities had dried up.

Today, Prams are occasionally found in learn-to-sail and community sailing programs but they are no longer an organized class and are virtually never raced.

By contrast, with 300,000 boats worldwide, IODs have become the world's largest class. In the U.S., according to Charlie Montgomery, president of the U.S. Optimist Dinghy Association, there are now 7,300 Optimists, in 36 states. "The number of boats here has more than quadrupled in this decade," he reports proudly.

Ireland's Helen Mary Wilkes, international president since 1989, thinks that Clark Mills is one of the most unusual inventors in history. "There can be very few inventions which, 50 years later, still so closely resemble the original design. The materials have changed, but a blurred photo of a 1947 and a 1997 Optimist would be indistinguishable. From the start, the Optimist was a kid centered design. Clark Mills looked at kids, saw what they needed, and gave it to them."

The simplicity of the design is a reflection of Mills himself. "If you want a simple boat, ask a simple man," he says, cocking his glasses at a screwy angle on his face, crossing his eyes, then laughing at himself.

Although the modern design looks very much like its ancestor, Mills is not entirely pleased with the boat's evolution. "I used to sell hull, blades, and spars for just \$50—\$47 for materials and \$3 for profit. Now the boat costs so much that it's no longer very accessible," he laments. "And all that fancy hardware..." He shakes his head. "All I needed was one screw eye and some

stainless steel I bent up for rudder fittings."

Spurred by the promotional efforts of Green and McKay, Mills designed and built a wonderfully simple, stable, and safe boat. The Optimist has proven itself to the millions of children who have learned to sail and race in it. Mills' achievement was recognized in April by Clearwater Yacht Club, at its annual Clark Mills Optimist Regatta. Fifty years after launching the first Optimist, the club presented Mills with a silver tray, simply engraved "To Clark Mills—Thanks for the vision. 50 years of Optimist sailing, 1947-1997."

Mills is humble, totally unpretentious, completely genuine, and very salty. He enjoys laughing with people, making faces, and cracking jokes. If he's impressed with being called "The Father of the Optimist," it doesn't show. He deflects praise with a laugh, trying hard to give others the credit for his most successful design.

How rich did he get from designing the Optimist? Clark Mills never received—and never sought—any royalty or licensing fees from the Optimist. Had he done so, he and Helen (his wife of 48 years) would be receiving fat annual checks from busy Optimist builders all around the world. But Mills has no regrets as he looks back on his boat building career. "I didn't make out very well on the money end, but I certainly enjoyed myself. The boat building business is just great." He sighs, pauses, and smiles to himself. "Yes sir, it's just great!"

— Bill Douglas is a writer, an attorney, and editor of *Optinews*, the Optimist class magazine. He lives in Florida with his wife and two sons.

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Kevin Findley - Vice Commodore

Kevin Findley is the son of Wayne and Joy Findley who joined the Ninnescah Yacht Club in 1981. Though having sailboats in the family as long as he can remember, the sailing bug didn't really bite him until the early 1990's. It was at that point that he and his father started racing his dad's Catalina 22 together, participating in KBRs and many local regattas. Kevin also frequently crewed for Warren Fitzpatrick on his C-22. After some excellent coaching from Warren (along with the replacing of the “rags”) “Fascination” was finally in a place other than last.

Kevin inherited the boat when Wayne passed away in February 1998 and the membership to the Ninnescah Sailing Association was transferred to him not long after that. He has worked on the Regatta Committee, been a Presiding Race Officer over a regatta or two and in 2004 served as the Chairman of the Regatta Committee. He is a member of the Catalina 22 Class Association, CSSA and US Sailing.

On most Wednesday nights throughout the summer, “Fascination” can still be found participating in the KBRs races. Kevin participates in regattas when his schedule allows. He and his wife Lisa are both teachers and enjoy having their summers off. Kevin teaches instrumental music in El Dorado and also plays percussion in the Wichita Symphony Orchestra and with Music Theater of Wichita. They have two children, Jessica who is twelve and Joel who is nine. Their children attend the Andover Public Schools where Lisa teaches elementary art.

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