

RYC ROOTS



A Historical Perspective of the Racine Yacht Club Through Time.

Chapter 6 • September 2015

Racine Yacht Club: The First Half Century, Part 2

Part 1 of this insert appeared with the June 2015 Reef Point.

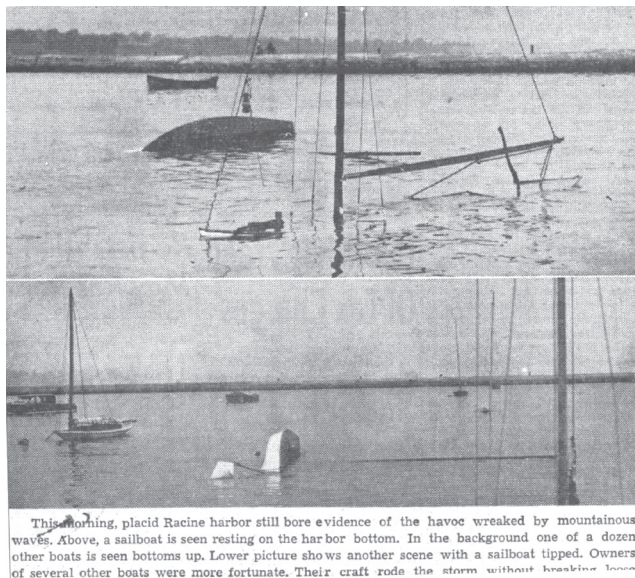
Much of this material is excerpted from a Racine Yacht Club 50th Anniversary booklet.



Dedicated to Bill Richter. Commodore Richter's service to the Club over decades is legendary. Always kind and soft spoken, there is a reason why his portrait is hung in the dining room. Without his tireless efforts to archive news clippings, it is unlikely that we would have historical records from the 30's through the 70's.

September 9, 1938

Strong winds wrought havoc to Racine boats within for three days. Eight boats were torn from their moorings and estimates of damages will amount to more than \$5,000.00.



This morning, placid Racine harbor still bore evidence of the havoc wreaked by mountainous waves. Above, a sailboat is seen resting on the harbor bottom. In the background one of a dozen other boats is seen bottoms up. Lower picture shows another scene with a sailboat tipped. Owners of several other boats were more fortunate. Their craft rode the storm without breaking loose.

September 6, 1938

Grand Haven, Mich. (AP) *Calypso*, a Chicago Yacht Club entry, won the Queens Cup in the Universal Division of the Milwaukee to Grand Haven race on Saturday. *Gloriant*, owned by Anthony Herrmann of the Racine Yacht Club of Racine, was second, and *Lively Lady*, owned by Otto Dreher of South Shore was third.

May 30, 1939

Racine's *Gloriant* won the Chicago to Milwaukee Cruising race.

July 1939

Gloriant wins 331 mile Chicago to Mackinac race. Elapsed time of 62:47.44. The biggest thing about this whole race from the Racine Club's standpoint was that the Milwaukee Sentinel claimed the *Gloriant* as a Milwaukee boat.

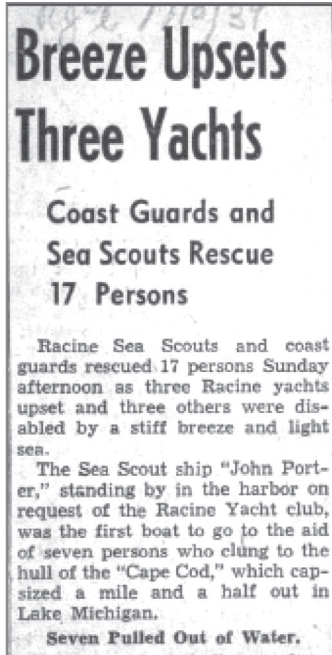
July 9, 1939

Racine Coast Guards on Sunday rescued 17 yachters as five small craft from the Racine Yacht Club got in trouble during sudden squalls. Three of the boats tipped over, spilling their occupants into the water. The other two were disabled. A party of seven clung to the overturned hull of the *Cape Cod*, which capsized a mile and a half out in Lake Michigan, directly east of Racine. Coast Guards took the party aboard their rescue ship and helped bring the overturned craft to the harbor. The *Cape Cod* is owned by Don Lape. With him were his wife, their two children, Erwin Schoeppe, Art Harris and Phil Chambers. There was no damage to the boat reported. A movie camera was lost overboard in the accident. A party of four was marooned a mile northeast of Racine when a spar broke. Coast Guards towed the disabled craft, the *Yo Ho Ho*, owned by Robert Felbab, to shore. Thorpe Thielen's *Has Sas*, a 20 foot sloop, overturned in a sudden gust of wind near shore at North Beach. The coast guard boat helped right the craft. Steve Wasy's *Sapramorgie*, a 20 foot sloop, was towed to safety after its rigging was torn away southeast of the harbor. Wasy was with one other sailor. At the harbor entrance, Cliff Petersen's *Scamp*, an 18 foot sailboat, capsized in a sudden squall. With him was one other person. Both were brought ashore by the Coast Guards. "If the yachtsmen are going to continue putting on Sunday shows like that, they ought to give prior notice and let us landlubbers in on the excitement. They might even

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put up bleachers along the lake shore and charge admission" noted Tex Reynolds, *Racine Journal Times*.



Courtesy of *Racine Journal Times*

July, 1939

The Racine yacht *Gloriant*, owned by Tony Herrmann (Sr.), placed second and third in two races at Milwaukee this weekend. At South Shore Yacht Club, the *Gloriant* trailed Ed Purtell's *Vagabond* by 2 minutes, 2 seconds, over a double six mile course. Otto Dreher's *Lively Lady* was third. In the second race, Over a 12 mile course at the Milwaukee Yacht Club, the *Stephia*, owned by Eldred Stephenson came in first; the *Lively Lady*, second; and *Gloriant* third. The *Valiant* failed to finish when it ripped a spinnaker.

July, 1939

Skipper Herman Jansen, 17, and the crew Herman Rotz, 17, and Ed Piepmeyer, 15, won the Great Lakes Star Junior Championship in the waters off Milwaukee.

August 23, 1939

23rd Regatta Sat., Aug. 6th and Sun., Aug. 7th, William Rohen

Wanna see the fleet come in? Saturday 2 to 6 FREE!

Wanna dance on the coolest floor in town to a hot band Saturday night? (members and guests) FREE!

Wanna see the Mackinac winner — the tall, dark hand-some, smiling, pearly toothed Tony Herrmann and his three lugs Langlois, Kohlberg and Wheeler? They will be on exhibition (in the west end of the oar shed) Saturday 2 to 4 Sunday 3 to 5. Nickle a look.

Wanna see the Champion Great Lakes star boat skipper? Jr. Janson and his aces, Piepmeyer and Rotz? Any time either day. FREE! Offerings will be accepted at the bar towards spending money for the boys at the Inter-national Regatta at Greenwich Connecticut August 26th.

Wanna see where the Mackinac \$5,000.00 cup, the Great Lakes Star cup and the International Star cup will repose for the coming year? Give a look in the lounge. FREE!

Wanna see the first printed menu and wine list ever issued by your club and consume its suggestions at prices almost bordering on no profit? Any time both days.

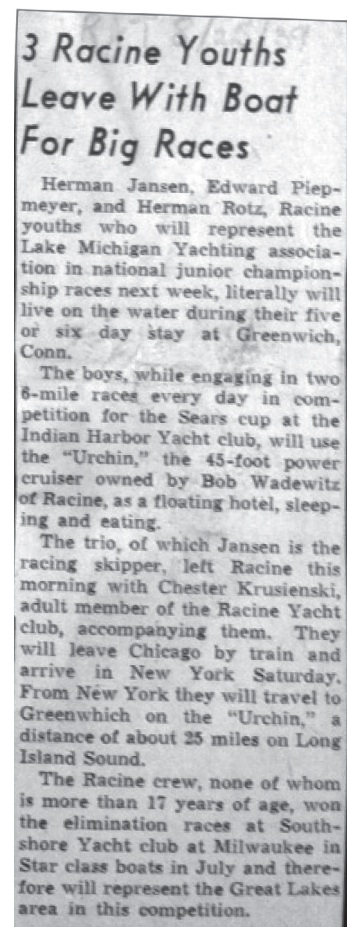
Wanna see the biggest fleet of sail boats ever to enter a Racine regatta? Then come down Sunday morning at 9:30. Wanna see motor boats dash, dart and dump? 2 P.M.

Wanna see Erin beat Rex for a quart of schnapps or a case of beer? Sunday afternoon? — Maybe! FREE! Yours truly, Entertainment Committee William H. Rohan, Chairman.

This sounds almost like any week end at the present Racine Yacht Club grounds. Even like 3 or 4 in the morning for some of our so called

early risers, or is it the late go-homers. If you figure it out don't call me keep it to yourself. But they seem to have had as much fun as the present members do. If a person doesn't think so then they should attend the entertainment committee's Fish Fries during the winter months. This should keep some people up and about until the early hours, and not cleaning up the galley either.

August 23, 1939



Courtesy of *Racine Journal Times*

Three Racine youths who like to sail will get their greatest thrill next week. They will race on the Atlantic Ocean for the first time and in national competition for the first time. The boys, who will leave Friday for Greenwich, Conn., are Herman Jansen, 17,



Edward Piepmeyer, 15, and Herman Rotz, 16. Chester Krusienski, adult member of the Racine Yacht Club and veteran skipper, will accompany them. The competition, two races every day, will start Monday. The Racine boys are representing the Lake Michigan Yachting Association and the Western Michigan Yachting Association, comprising the entire Great Lakes area. They won the right to enter the eastern races by being first in points in a series of elimination races in Star class boats held July 10 to 14 at the South Shore Yacht Club, Milwaukee. They won from 12 crews of the Great Lakes area. In the eastern races the crews will sail Atlantic 1 designs, 30 foot keel sloops with 300 feet of working canvas. Since these boats are equipped with spinnakers, the Racine crew has been practicing with Chester Krusienski's Highlight and on Manford Christianson's Alskling. The racing yachts will be provided by the Indian Harbor Yacht Club at Greenwich, the host club. The Sears cup, which Jansen, Piepmeyer and Rotz hope to bring back to Racine this year, was put in competition in 1921 by Commodore Herbert M. Sears of the Eastern Yacht Club. It is competed for annually by youths between 15 and 18 years of age. The Pleon Yacht Club won the first series of races in 1921 and the Pequot Yacht Club has captured the cup the last two years. Both are eastern organizations. The crews will sail each yacht once in the eight races. They will race over triangular six-mile courses. Rules of the North American Yacht Racing union will apply. (Because of a gear failure in one race, the Racine crew placed second overall).

September 16, 1940

Highlight, the mahogany cruising cutter owned and skippered by Chester Krusienski of the Racine Yacht Club, won the Wind Point race against a fleet of 20 crack Milwaukee yachts. The race was sailed in a shifting northerly wind and heavy sea. The victory was a feather in the cap of the *Highlight*, which was the smallest yacht in the fleet. Krusienski had sailed in two previous Wind Point races but was dogged by hard luck. A mast fitting was carried away in the 1938 race and the boom was broken in 1939. The crew in Sunday's race consisted of Skipper Krusienski, First Mate Herbert Panch and light canvas man forward, Fred Gunther. The race ended an almost perfect season for the *Highlight* which won 10 first places and 2 seconds in 12 races. Among the trophies won were the new Douglas cruising award, the Lake Michigan Yachting association time prize and the George Orr trophy race.



The High Light in action just outside of Racine harbor.
High Light Sails in First In 27 Out of 30 Races

Racine Journal Times photo August 23, 1941

April 29, 1942

Robert Wadewitz donated his boat *Urchin III*, to the U.S. Coast Guard. Along with *Chimes* owned by Harry Griswold; *Rex*, Otto Wadewitz; and *Oriole*, Robert Bewley this made two four boats that left the Racine Yacht Club to join the members that were serving in the service during World War II.

July 20, 1943

Gloriant beats *Falcon* by 32 seconds in 36th Chicago- Mackinac race. *Gloriant* is now owned by Vitas Thomas of Racine.

December 13, 1943

Racine Journal Times

Presentation of the Chicago-Mackinac trophy was made to the Racine Boat *Gloriant*. Owner was Vitas Thomas, crew members on this trip were: Roy Smith, Ray Kiehl, Henry Smieding, Tony Herrmann and Ed Jedrzykowski.



Sworn Into Coastguard Reserve

Sixteen Racine men, having completed 10 weeks of basic training, have been sworn into the coastguard reserve (T), subject to call for temporary service. The 16 were sworn in by Lt. Comm. Paul Dale of Chicago (with paper in hand) and now have the rank of seaman first class. The reserve is dissimilar from the auxiliary in that reservists have military status. They are subject to call, and are paid subsistence and travel expenses. The new reservists are Philip Freshling, Roy Dally, Theodore Eickner, Harold Bygones, Lawrence Kennedy, Henry S. Smieding, Vance Smith, Arthur Seitz, Harold Hurley, Mike Sare Jr., F. J. Ditchfield, Ed Chadak, C. R. Jenness, Harry Colter, George F. Betts and Ed Jennik. A second class has started basic training at the Racine Yacht club.

Racine Journal Times photo April 19, 1943



Reminiscences by Dick Rooney

Dick Rooney, Jim Rooney's brother, describes himself as being a "boat bum" in the late 1930s. He was active in sailing as one of Bill Richter's Juniors, formally joined the Yacht Club in 1947, and by 1957 was a member of the Club's Board of Directors. Dick had to resign the post because of a move to Missouri that year. This 2004 letter from him to Janice Tomasek on the occasion of an RYC Junior reunion is transcribed exactly as written. Clarification of some names and one explanation have been added (in italics).

The Reunion I Missed: 2004

So what's a reunion? It's got to be people 'cause it isn't all the other things that brought us together. The things that brought us together are gone, but of course, not forgotten.

I remember greasing the winch cables. And oiling the yard with Bill Richter before regattas so as to keep the dust down. Then the seniors would ask us not to hang around during the regatta days. But we did. Made money rowing out and bringing visiting yachtsmen in from their moorings.

And when WWII began, the federal government decreed that all boats in federal waters had to have light on at night, so Bill Berby, Carly (*Tomasek*), Gene Hardy and I scrambled to get the most customers. Row out at night to light the kerosene lanterns and back out at 5 or 6 in the morning to turn them off. That was a 50 cent job; 50 cents per week per boat.

First race I ever raced was in Homer McNally's Shamrock. I'm not sure I knew then about leeward rights, overlaps, mast abeam or barging the line, or whatever. I did know about starboard tack, but everybody did; the milkman, the iceman, my grandmother; everyone. *Mystic, Margo, Carmen, Shamrock*, etc. (all names of *Dyer*

Dinghies sailed at the Club in the late 30s to early 40s). Great Dinghies. And Henry Smieding taking us to Chicago to sail against the Columbia dink Jrs. I remember that vividly.

Bill Berby and I built a boat together, the Lemon Jr. which we built out of lumber we stole from the Water Co. construction project; Grade X knotty pine, I think. We sailed it out about 100 yards before it sank. At least we named it right, the Lemon Jr.

Al Healy (*Jim Healy's brother*) and wife Murph couldn't fit into his Penguin, so he turned it over to Avis and me to race. And then there was the time Joey Tomasek was inching his way out of the dinghy harbor and Carly had the starter gun (*the cannon*) and blew a hole in Joey's sail, or set it on fire, I don't remember which, but it was spectacular.

And there were those "special" boats in the harbor; *Gloriant, Northland, Alskling*, and the great *Cape Cod*. They're gone, but not forgotten. Later came the seabird yawls, *Voyager* and *Voree*. *Voree* was built in the driveway next to our house.

I remember crewing for Petey Goldick on *Sylvoia* one year and then with (*Ray*) Nerad on *Spica* for a year or two. We couldn't leave any other club regatta until Petey had danced with every woman in the place. And then those older (?) guys: Mousy (*John Tomasek*), Jim Fox, Frank Downey, Snapper (*Ray Knapp*) & Cookie (*Ray Cook*), Mahoney (*Matt Dunham*), Ewald (*Hennig*), etc. Sailed with Mahoney and friends (he was skipper that weekend) on *Shady Lady* at a Kenosha regatta. No wind, flat sea, lots of flies.

We went sailing on a chilly November morning with Dick Hansen. He made me drink a shot of aquavit before I could come aboard. Geez! Danish kerosene. I did the sailing (great sailing day) while he tried to shoot seagulls with a .22 rifle. The seagulls were safe.

And Herman Jansen (the star Jr.) and Great Lakes Starboat Champion with (*Edward*) Peipmeyer and (*Herman*) Rotz.



War and Water Sports Combine to Increase Activity in Racine Harbor; Rescue Boats and Yachts Launched

Susanna Gunther, shown at the right in the above picture paints the bottom of her Snipe, *First Love* which she will skipper this season. Not far away, Mrs. Louise Griffith varnishes the rail of *Vandal* while her husband works in a defense plant. *Racine Journal Times* photo April 19, 1943

And I still remember the air horn on Herman's car. You could hear him coming a mile away from the yacht club.

And then there was the happiest guy I ever knew, Joey Tomasek. Does anybody remember Joe when he wasn't smiling?

And then came the Westside rowdy boys; Don and Roy (*Scheller*), and Ron (*Hansen*) and Jerry (*Jensen*). *Jolly Roger* and *Davy Jones* guys (both boats, *Davy Jones* was Ron *Hansen's*). And Bill Decker and Tom Owen. All good guys, good sailors. And Kaiser (*Kasabian*) and Jim Shinkunas. Kaiser was an expert, could fix anything. He borrowed my Model A which had rattling doors and said he could fix them for me. When he brought it back, he had spot welded the doors to the frame. No more rattles! I found out what it meant to hop into your car or hop out of it.

I sold my Model A to Sid Young who was building boats in Cape's barn at the time. I then bought my first real car from Mousy, a car salesman for a period of time. 1937 Ford V-8 Club Coupe. I got my money's worth on that one. Great car.

In retrospect, I don't think I ever met any guys better than the guys from the RYC. I guess there was something about sailing and the clean water and fresh air that attracted decent people. It was great being young with you guys.

— Moby Dick



A publication of the RYC Historical Committee, a volunteer group dedicated to the preservation and dissemination of RYC's rich history. Written by Steve Wheeler using historical information, excerpts, and illustrations from Tony Hermann Jr's archives and notes from Jim Rooney.