One-Design
One-Design

... Fully appreciate what has been accomplished ...

The Fish Boats were true one-design sailboats in the sense that all boats had to conform to detailed plans and specifications. Most small sailboat racing on Tampa Bay between the two world wars, was done in a variety of boats built to conform with “development” class rules — and the rules were few, which let builders develop faster boats.

The Trailer Class rule limited length to 16 feet and sail area to 125 square feet. The Parke brothers, Harvey and Harold, and Del Jordan of St. Petersburg were noted innovators in the Trailer Class. Harvey Parke and Del Jordan both subsequently served as sailing masters of the St. Petersburg Junior Yacht Club.

The now-ubiquitous Snipe reportedly evolved from the Trailer Class. The Cricket Class featured a “cat” (no jib) rig with a wishbone boom. Moth Class boats were limited to 11 feet and a specified sail area. Activity in the Moth Class was concentrated in Big Bayou around the Gandy family home in what is now known as the Driftwood area of St. Petersburg. Moth boats were best boarded and sailed from shallow water. An empty Moth boat quickly capsized and even a well-sailed Moth eventually capsized.

Cricket and Trailer class boats were more substantial. They could be sailed from the club dock and used for venturing about the bay.

In the early 1950s, Charlie Hunt and Charley Morgan pioneered highly successful Moth boats with hiking boards. Ted Irwin created his own unique Moth design years later. They all would achieve prominence as yacht designers. The Cricket and Trailer classes largely disappeared after WWII; the Moth Class remains as an international development class. After World War II, some members believed the club should be represented in a true national one-design class with a fleet of privately owned sailboats. They concluded that the 19-foot Lightning Class boat would be best suited to sailing conditions on Tampa Bay.

In November 1946, the first four Lightning Class boats were purchased, two by John L. “Johnny” Wilhelm, to promote the class. The boats cost $700, including sails. The local fleet grew to 14 boats by 1952. Home and away regattas were scheduled with Miami and Tampa Bay area clubs. Winners and losers are long forgotten, but participants long after remembered “Edith and Fritz’s” restaurant in Miami, where you could get all the lobster you could eat for $2.50.

In 1948, the Winter Championship Regatta of the Lightning Class was launched at the St. Petersburg Yacht Club. Miami boatbuilder Dick Bertram won the inaugural, an event, which, through the years, has become the cornerstone of a Southern winter circuit for the International Lightning Class Association (ILCA).

Ed Baird became SPYC’s first and only Mid-Winter Lightning champion in 1983.

Gone, but not forgotten, are the costume parties put on during the Lightning Mid-Winter Championship. More than a few participants from the North and Midwest readily admitted they came as much for the social activities as they did for the racing. The ILCA has honored SPYC members Wally Bishop, Dan Agnew, Ted Tolson, Bruce Watters Jr. and Peter Wormwood with life memberships for their contributions to this great regatta.

Colin Park retired from Dow Chemical in Midland, Mich., and moved to St. Petersburg in 1999 with his wife, Karen. Together, they had won the Lightning North American Championship in 1988. As an SPYC member he served as the class president in 2001 and 2002 and won the Lightning North American Masters’ Championship in 2001 and 2003. Following Colin’s death in 2007, SPYC’s Salty Sisters established a trophy in his name to be awarded to the couple sailing together on the highest-placing boat in the Lightning Mid-Winter Regatta. In 2009, SPYC conducted the 62nd Mid-Winter Lightning Class Regatta at St. Petersburg.
Thistle

A few years after the introduction of the Lightning Class to SPYC, Johnny Wilhelm, always an innovator, turned up at the Junior Club with an exotic 17-foot molded plywood boat called a Thistle. A local fleet of these post-war, high-performance boats rapidly formed. After SPYC’s Bill Mangold won the Mid-Winter Thistle Class Championship at Sarasota in 1955, with Charley Morgan serving as crew and sailmaker, the event moved to St. Petersburg, where it found a permanent home. Other club members who have won this prestigious title were Frank Bessey in 1960 and Ed Sherman Jr. in 1962. Rodney Glover of Cincinnati won the Mid-Winters in 1969; he became a member of SPYC in the 1980s. “Doc” Jennings’ son, John W. “Johnny” Jennings, at the age of 17, had set a higher standard by winning the Thistle Class National Championship at Fairhope, Ala., in 1958.

The 54th consecutive Thistle Mid-Winter Regatta in St. Petersburg was conducted by SPYC in 2009. The Thistle Class Association has designated the Mid-Winter championship as a Silver Chevron Regatta and the Thistles winter championship as a Silver Chevron Regatta and the Thistles. The incident made local headlines for several days until cooler heads finally prevailed, and all charges were dropped. The embarrassed “quick-draw” officer wiped the egg off his face, his dream of apprehending the notorious “Duke” shattered, and Rohrbauh resumed his starting committee duties.

Rhodes Bantam

The Rhodes Bantam class was a popular class in the 1960s. The first SPYC member to win a One-Design Class National Championship was Barbara Tolson who, with her father, Ted Tolson, as crew, won the International Rhodes Bantam Class title at Jack- sonville in 1954. Both Barbara Tolson and Johnny Jen- nings learned to sail and race in SPYC’s junior sailing program. Their accomplishments provided merely a glimpse of what was yet to come from SPYC’s junior sailors.

Windmill

Clark Mills of Dunedin, father of the Optimist Pram, designed a lovely, easily constructed plywood sloop called the Windmill in the early 1950s. Windmill activity at SPYC has waxed and waned over the years but the class has a strong following nationally and Ethan Bixby, with wife Trudy as crew, has won the national championship in venues from Miami to the Great Lakes in 1999, 2003, 2004, 2007 and 2008.

Bixby is a world-class sailor of high performance dinghies of many designs winning the 505 Class World Championship at San Francisco in 1981, the North American Championship in 1976 and 1990 and the European 505 Championship at Palermo, Italy, (75-boat fleet) in 2008. Dinghy racing is Bixby’s avocation. He is a sail- maker and a sought-after professional sailor on the various international “big boat” circuits.

Star

The International Star Class has attracted some of SPYC’s best sailors. The Star is a physically demand- ing, two-person keel sloop, which is sailed in the Olympics.


International action: Mark Mendelblatt and crew Mark Strube race in the 2009 Delta Lloyd Regatta in Medemblik, Netherlands. Mendelblatt grew up in the junior program and ranks among SPYC’s top sailors. He was U.S. Sailing’s Sportsman of the Year in 2007. Source: Joe Jean Boeuf
Flying Dutchman

The Flying Dutchman was an Olympic sailing class from 1960 through 1992 when it was displaced by the Laser. The FD is a blazingly fast two-person sailing dinghy that gains stability by having the crew person stand straight out from the side of the boat with the aid of a wire harness rigged from the mast. Jack Powell, who made his mark on ocean racing by winning three SORCs, served as North American commodore of the class and instigated SPYC’s hosting of the World Championship for the Flying Dutchman Class in 1962, the first world sailing championship to be hosted by the club. SPYC hosted the World Championships for this class again in 1997 and 2006.

Several SPYC-hosted events for the FD Class in the early ‘60s received wide national and international yachting news coverage. In the spring of 1960, a SPYC race committee conducted the Olympic Selection Trials for the Flying Dutchman Class off Clearwater Beach.

This site was selected because wave and wind conditions were reputed to be quite similar to the Bay of Naples, Italy, where the 1960 Olympic Sailing Races were scheduled. In 1962, SPYC hosted the World Championship for the International Flying Dutchman Class. There were competitors from 23 countries in the championship fleet while another 50 entries sailed for the Open Championship. At the awards banquet, St. Petersburg Times outdoors writer Red Marston sat next to a visiting Russian dignitary, whom Marston remembered as having an eye for the ladies. Several years later Marston saw his dinner companion on television being arrested by the FBI, charged with espionage and deported. FDs regularly compete in the annual Multi-class Regatta hosted by SPYC.

One of a Kind

In 1966, the club hosted the Yachting Magazine One of A Kind Regatta. This was a unique event that pitted representatives of 90 classes of sailboats in races with five performance-grouped divisions. This was one of the few occasions when Tampa Bay has been graced with a 39-foot Class A lake slope. The largest division was the Midget Ocean Racing Club (MORC) with 26 designs entered. The best sailors of the time came to ensure that the boats they were invested in, emotionally, financially, or both, were sailed to their potential. Here are a few: Star – Dick Stearns; Flying Dutchman Gene Hinkel and crew, Doug Sherman, practice for the 1962 Flying Dutchman World Championship Regatta at St. Petersburg. City of St. Petersburg

SPORT

After the 1968 Olympics, the U.S. Olympic Sailing Committee decided to seek the help of geographically diverse yacht clubs to schedule races in the Olympic classes for training purposes. The St. Petersburg Yacht Club was among the first to volunteer and was quickly selected. The first SPORT (St. Petersburg Olympic Regatta Training) Regatta was held in late March 1971. Races were held on two courses in Tampa Bay for the five Olympic classes: Soling, Star, Finn, Dragon and Flying Dutchman. The concept was to complement the Canadian Olympic Regatta Kingston (CORK) held each summer with an off-season “winter” regatta that was development oriented. Sailors could try out sails, equipment, techniques and tactics under highly competitive conditions without risking their ranking or standing in the class. They loved it.

SPORT was repeated in 1972, and following the 1972 Olympics, a new series of SPORT Regattas were conducted in 1974, 1975 and 1976, dropping the Dragon Class and including the new Olympic classes 470 and Tornado. Contestants came principally from the

Ed Baird and crew were second in the 1984 U.S. Soling National Championships. City of St. Petersburg

Ted Turner; M-20 – Buddy Melges; International 14 – Dr. Stuart Walker; Lightning – Tom Allen; and Cal 25 – Bill Lapworth. Ted Tolson headed the race committee and Wally Bishop handled publicity and entertainment. The regatta was a great success.
One-Design

United States and Canada, with a scattering of other foreign entries. Literally hundreds of SPYC members from both the sailing and power cruiser ranks volunteered their services to this massive undertaking.

Key in the formation and administration of the SPORT program were Jack Powell, Charley Morgan, Bruce Watters Jr., Ted Tolson and Pat Talbot, among others.

The U.S. Olympic Committee did not encourage all-class training regattas again until 1995. SPYC hosted Olympic training regattas in 1995 and 1996 to prepare competitors and race committee members for the 1996 Olympic Games in Atlanta. The Olympic sailing venue was Wassaw Sound, downriver from Savannah.

In the ’70s, two new classes stormed the one-design sailing world, the Laser and the J24. The Laser is a one-person sailboat or an item of sports equipment, depending upon your viewpoint, which the purchaser receives in a cardboard box. The boat can be assembled ready to race in about 30 minutes, but plan on five years’ hard work to race a Laser at top level. Hundreds of thousands have been manufactured. Like the Optimist Pram, the Laser has reached every corner of the sailing world. Two products of SPYC’s junior sailing program have reached the pinnacle of this class. Ed Baird won the Laser World Championship in Canada in 1980. Mark Mendelblatt was North American Champion in 1995 and 1999 and won the Olympic Trials to represent the United States in the class in 2004.

In the Major Awards appendix to this book, you will find numerous achievements by SPYC junior and adult sailors in the Standard Laser and variants of this class including the two-person Laser II.

The J24 is a keelboat raced with a three- to five-person crew. Suited for coastal racing and intense round-the-buoys racing, and offering the highest available level of performance when introduced, the J24 became the class to buy into. SPYC’s fleet was about 15 boats in the early ’80s. Ed Baird emerged from that fleet to win the J24 World Championship in Sweden in 1983.


Chris Larson, now a world-class professional sailor residing in Annapolis, Md., like Baird, was a graduate of SPYC’s junior sailing program. Larson has been a major force in the J24 class winning the World Championship in 1996 and placing second in 1992, 1994, and 2009. Larson retains an affiliation with SPYC.
In July 1988, former St. Petersburg Yacht Club junior sailor Allison Jolly was showing the transom of her 470 to the rest of the fleet in the United States Olympic Yachting Trials held off Newport, R.I. Jolly’s lead was such that she didn’t have to sail in the eighth and final qualifying race to earn a trip to Pusan, South Korea, site of the Summer Games.

Jolly and crew Lynne Jewell, of Newport, entered the record books as the first women to represent the United States in Olympic yachting, the 470 competition having just been added to the schedule in 1988. Little did they know the best was yet to be.

Shortly after they arrived in South Korea, Jolly and Jewell were joined by Jolly’s sister, Jocelyn, a St. Petersburg physical therapist, who was to provide both moral and medical support. Left behind were Jolly’s parents, Blanchard and Becky Jolly. It was both a strategic and an emotional decision.

Blanchard Jolly, a past commodore, had become convinced that he was a jinx. He’d watch his daughter race and she’d do poorly; stay away, and her performance would soar. At the U.S. Women’s Championships hosted by SPYC in January 1988, Jolly sneaked out on the Pier to watch the action on Tampa Bay. After a less than impressive performance, Allison accused her father: “Daddy, you watched the races today, didn’t you?” So, the senior Jollys stayed home, kissing their daughters goodbye and good luck.

Everyone knows that the essence of the Olympic Games is not winning but taking part. Everyone knows that the essence of the Olympic Games is not winning but taking part. Everyone knows that the essence of the Olympic Games is not winning but taking part.

In the mid-1980s, Bill and Sherry Welch led a social club could make such a renewed commitment to its sailing program. The social success is largely dependent upon a membership that is proud to be a part of an organization that excels in all aspects of a challenging and healthy sport that is relevant to the community. These elements of the club are inseparable; however, leadership and commitment from club members is what makes it all work.

SPYC’s Sonar fleet was used in 1992 for the Mooring’s Women’s Invitational Regatta.

**Sonar**

One of many examples of leadership and commitment was the formation of a Sonar Class Fleet 801 at SPYC. In the mid-1980s, Bill and Sherry Welch led a
One-Design

Bill and Sherry Welch race at the 2000 Snipe World Masters in Horsen, Denmark. SPYC archive

A group that was seeking a boat that was less expensive, that required only a two-person crew, that provided good performance with good sea-keeping ability in Tampa Bay’s sometimes choppy waters, that was backed by an established class organization. The venerable Snipe, a 15.5-foot sloop designed in the 1930s, met these needs.

The Welches bought two boats, established sailing dates, sent out reminders of events and were on the water constantly.

The fleet grew to 24 boats by the early ’90s. SPYC hosted the World Junior Snipe Championship in 1988 and the combined Snipe Women’s U.S., Women’s World, and U.S. Masters Championships in 2002 with 26 women’s teams and 61 masters’ teams. Fleet 801 was well represented at the 2009 Snipe Class National Championships.

Snipe Fleet #801 loads up for the 2009 Snipe Class National Championships at Pensacola. The specially built trailer holds up to nine boats. Eric Lane / SPYC archive

Melges and Sunfish

Two new one-design classes have taken root at SPYC recently. They are at the opposite ends of the sailing spectrum; serious sailors throughout the world compete in them.

The Melges 24 is a state of the art “sport” boat featuring a huge asymmetrical spinnaker and exciting performance. These boats typically race with a five-person crew. Chris Larson was the 2006 U.S. National Champion in this class. Marty Kullman was the highest finishing corinthian (non-professional) skipper at the 2005 Melges World Championships.

The Sunfish is a solid, lateen-rigged, one-person sailing surfboard that has been around for decades. Many excellent sailors who want to keep their lives simple have acquired a Sunfish. The Mid-Winter Regatta for this class typically attracts 70 to 80 entrants. Dr. David Mendelblatt, who on at least one occasion has called himself “the fast Mendelblatt,” won this regatta three out of four years during 2004-2007.

US Sailing

The governing body for sailboat racing in the United States, US Sailing (formerly the USYRU), operating through district and state organizations, has for many decades conducted “ladder” series of events each summer, where junior sailors in single-handed, double-handed and keel sailboats, and adults (men,
women and mixed) move up to final matches at the national level with championship in each.


Lou Schowe won the FSA Men’s Championship in 1956 to be followed by Charley Morgan’s win in 1957. Fran Buchan won the FSA Women’s Championship in 1968. In 1970, Jennings, now John W. Jennings, D.C., was awarded the Mallory Cup for winning the U.S. Men’s Sailing Championship with Barbara Tolson Pardee and her husband, Jim Pardee, as crew.

Later that summer, Jennings, with Don Dunham and Ed Sherman Jr. as crew, won the Prince of Wales Bowl, emblematic of the U.S. Inter-club Match Racing Championship. Sherman, with Hubert “Bud” Rutland III, and Harvey Ford as crew, won the Mallory Cup in 1972. Jennings, with the Pardees again as crew, came back to win the Mallory a second time in 1973.

In 1979, Allison Jolly, with Susan Blaketer, Janice Robertson and Sue Reischmann as crew, won the U.S. Women’s Sailing Championship (Adams Trophy) and Jennings, with son John M. Jennings and Don Krippendorf as crew, again won the Prince of Wales Bowl.

The St. Francis Yacht Club has conducted an annual Invitational Masters Championship on San Francisco Bay for decades. Invitations are extended to men, 55 and older, who have won major national and international titles. John W. Jennings has won this regatta four times, the last being in 2007.

This narrative contains only a small part of the sailing achievements of our members of all ages. Please see the Appendix for more.