

A HISTORY OF THE LIGHTNING, "DOWN UNDER"

By Ken Ross

Editor's Note: Early this year, President Hatfield received a correspondence from Ken and Jill Ross of South Yarra, Victoria. We offer their insightful look at the Lightning Class in Australia.

Back in '60-62 I undertook to promote the Lightning in Australia. I wrote articles for yachting magazines and formed an ILCA branch in this country, all of my own initiative. Then I wrote to Margaret Teske at the South Haven office of the Lightning Class. I asked for help with PR type material. The ILCA Board at that time was delighted with our efforts. Marty O'Meara was President at my initial approach, followed by Jay Limbaugh.

About thirty boats were built, of varying quality standards, spread over most States, with about 15 or so here in Victoria. I wrote and posted out a monthly newsletter to all interested parties (they became good talking-points) to whip up some enthusiasm.



DOWN UNDER.....

John Walker's *Muggins*, doing it very easily on Lake Marquarie near Newcastle, New South Wales.

We graduated to a National Championship in January, '65 (our summer) in which I had the very great pleasure to finish second. That was sufficient for me to qualify for the Worlds in Napoli in September, '65. My result there was total disaster, but we made many firm friendships which I value highly — which, perhaps, is a secondary, but unstated, aim of the Class.

In our travels, we stayed with the Limbaughs in their house in the Ohio woods and we were given celebrity treatment wherever we went! The Fallons, the O'Mearas, the Smithers, the Allens, Swansons, the Muellers, and many others.....unforgettable! Marvelous people!

There was a young Australian who competed in the Youth Worlds a few years ago, I think it was held in Texas. I think he finished third and he had never seen the boat before the regatta. I tried to track him down when he returned to Sydney, which I think was his home port, but my enquiries yielded nothing. I thought he could carry the Lightning message, but it was not to be.

The first Australian Championship was held on Corio Bay at the Royal Geelong Yacht Club. It was on the site of the end of the Boston-built Clipper ship "Lightning", which had caught fire and burned to the water line years earlier. She held the record for a one-day run, I think of about 450 miles. She was built of American cedar, 12 to 16 inch-thick planks!

Two of our original Lightning owner/skippers became Presidents of the Victorian Yachting Council later in their careers. Ken Sime still has his boat (8070). It is non-active now and my cousin, Barry Scott (8076), is having his second term as President, VYC. So they were well known at the top level. The one Queensland boat owner, Ken Kibble, became Commodore of the Royal Queensland Yacht Club. A prestigious group, you would agree?

Barry went on to become a regular entrant in the Sydney-Hobart with a one-off Sparkman and Stephens one-tonner. Did well too...won his class. But that kind of activity required much dedication.

Marty O'Meara, sailing with Ted Turner, came out here on one occasion, in one of those Maxis. They won their class, too. He had a good look at Sydney harbour where Lightnings could prosper. Sydney could absorb about 60 to 80 Lightnings, easily.

Billy Osborne, whom I have known for many years, was a hero when I was learning to sail in the thirties, and a legend in his later years. The Japanese would have declared him a "National Treasure". Billy approved of the Lightnings and was keen to see them have a future here. The first Australian Fleet was at Blairgowrie, Fleet number 359.

As a PR writer a few years back, I built a story about a one-legged First War Veteran, (he would have been about 60 at the time), of how he built his Lightning slowly at home and then took it out and showed the young ones how to do it.

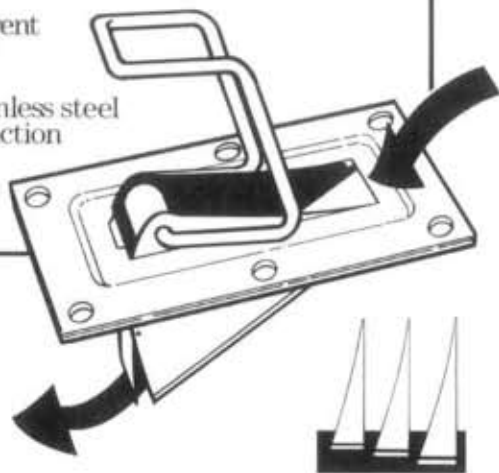
One big plus with the Lightning Class is the "all ages" aspect and family crewing. The very good socializing after

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the racing is something that is not practiced here to the same extent. A few beers, maybe a barbeque, but what I saw of the U.S. facilities was to us, outstanding. Never will I forget a dinner party at the Royal Canadian Yacht Club at Toronto. We were all there for a National Holiday weekend, I think perhaps in late July.

We were deeply conscious of the relationships of the class in meeting old friends, the friendships were just as important as the competing. In Naples it was just one continuation of the same festive party.

As most of you know, it takes a lot of time and effort to get a fleet going. There was much goodwill, yes, but the Secretaryship, to which I appointed myself, does the donkey work to get the whole thing rolling. But it hasn't taken off as I had hoped.

The yachties here are skiff mad! I heard Tom Allen bought an ex-demo 18-footer from the Australian owner. How it got to Buffalo, I can't imagine. The trick with them is that they plane up-wind! The crew of three stand on the extraordinary device some feet out from the boat. The leeward outrigger folds up out of the way and it is pretty exciting, 'tis said.

I don't do anything in the sailing line, nowadays. I have a small 16' power boat from which I planned to take pictures of other people's boats (I am a pro photographer) but I'm just too lazy or not hungry enough. I still read and follow Lightning class activities through *Flashes*, to which I look forward, and I send best wishes to all Lightning sailors.

FIRST ANNUAL DIXIE DISTRICT WOMENS

The Dixie District held its first Women's Championship Regatta at Podickory Yacht Club near Sandy Point State Park, Maryland on June 15 and 16.

Seven boats competed and in the first race Lisa Foulke of the Potomac River Yacht Club moved from 6th position by sailing high on the last reach to finish in first place, while the rest of us got clobbered by the current. Second and third to finish were Pam Racine of the Rehoboth Bay Sailing Association and Elaine Friebele of the Severn Sailing Association respectively. Unfortunately, due to a lack of wind, we retired to the shore where fortunately there was plenty of food and booze.

Sunday the winds cooperated, allowing for 2 races with 7 boats again participating. The first race was won by Lisa Foulke again, followed by Karen Long, and Robin Turner, both of Annapolis. The third race got off with slightly stronger winds. Robin Turner rounded the windward mark first, followed by Pam Racine and Marketa Jonas with the remaining 4 boats close behind. By the second round it was Robin Turner, Pam Racine and Nancy Fox with a fair lead over the rest of the fleet. At the jibe mark, Pam Racine slipped by Robin Turner on the inside to take the lead to the finish line, with Nancy Fox in second and Robin Turner in third.

The final positions for the weekend were: Lisa Foulke in first, Pam Racine in second, and Robin Turner in third.

Our first Womens Dixie Districts being an absolute success not only on the water, we plan to make this a yearly event. Thanks to all the members of the district who loaned their boats and supported this event. We know they will continue to do so in the future.



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