

Integration of Two Clubs

Portland Yacht Club and Foreside Yacht Club

Written by Jane Moody

1947 was a year of challenge and change within the Portland Yacht Club. The war, WWII, was over and the GI Bill was adding thousands of college educated young men and women to both the working and recreational worlds. It was time of prosperity.

For clarification it should be pointed out that in 1947 the PYC, the venerable second oldest continuously active yacht club in the United States, was located on the Portland waterfront. And by 1947 it had gone from its glory days of having notable yachts and yachtsman as members (I remember the elegance of the Hob Nob) to basically a men's gathering club (see pictures at the present yacht club.)

Across the bay on Falmouth Foreside existed the very young and upstart Foreside Yacht Club. It was formed by a ragtag group of young people, sailors all. It was formed because the only sailboat racing was found at the Centerboard Yacht Club located on a wharf in South Portland. In order to race, a few boats of various sizes and shapes would sail down to the Center for their regular Saturday series. Falmouth sailors also enjoyed the very lively annual meetings held at the Eastland Hotel. The Falmouth sailors continued racing with the Centerboard Club except for Interclub weekends which were held either at the Centerboard or at the then flourishing Mere Point sailing club.

In response the ragtag group decided to form their own

Foreside Yacht Club. Their meeting room was Mrs. Sherwood Picking's elegant "playroom" in the basement of her house, now #15 Handy Boat Road. Mrs. Picking's young Frances P. (now Helyar) was the artist who designed our letterhead. She also had two other children, Elizabeth P. (now Hamill) and Henry P. known as Rick, who incidentally is still active in the sailing world but not a member of the PYC. Not only is he active, there is nothing that he doesn't remember. Also part of this ragtag group were Jane and Dana Smith (now Jane Moody and Dana Poole, Adams Cup winners in 1949), Hannah Talbot (now Russell), John Russell and Bill Moody (long time crew member on John Robinson's Diablo.) Membership of the Falmouth Yacht Club consisted of the young sailors, their parents and quite a few Falmouth residents who felt the need for a yacht club presence on the Falmouth shore.

So the little group thrived with high goals and elegant tastes (see the scrap book for samples of the membership cards, place cards, racing circulars and stationary.) We did not run races but enjoyed all the club amenities. But change and challenge were coming.

In 1947, Commodore Harold Robinson (father of a later Commodore John M.C. Robinson owner of Diablo), race committee members Hasket Derby (father of the artist Alison Derby Hildreth), Herman Burgi (father of Anne) and J. Hopkins Smith (father of Jane Moody and Dana Poole) from the Portland Yacht Club approached the Foreside Yacht Club members and suggested a merger. They had stature and facilities and the Foreside Yacht Club had racing boats. It sounded so good, we would all become members of the PYC without dues! All except for one who some years back was "blackballed" by the PYC, not for moral indiscretion but for competitive business reasons.

That did not suit at all and to the PYC's astonishment the offer was politely (I hope) declined. However, it was not long before the merger indeed took place, the rejected member accepted into the PYC and the rest is history.

In 1947 the intrepid Mrs. Picking was a catalyst in replacing the motley group of boats. She purchased the first Lightning from Austin Smithwick originally named Blue Chip and renamed Ding Hao, #125. Soon to follow was Petrel, #363 purchased by the Smith girls (Jane and Dana), and Rascal (number forgotten) purchased by Hermon Burgi for his daughter Anne and another purchased by John Robinson (name and number both forgotten!) At roughly the same time, the Centerboard Yacht Club sailors were buying Lightnings creating between the two clubs a significant Lightning Fleet. As this was going along the PYC, now enriched by the boats of the Foreside Yacht Club, moved from their Portland waterfront location to Falmouth Foreside where it is still located today.