

The Binnacle

Charlevoix Yacht Club

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Red Fox Special Edition 2020

Labor Day weekend 2020 saw the 50th running of the Red Fox Regatta. The Red Fox is a central and key event in club history and in continuing of our vision for the future. The race in its current form runs from Charlevoix to Boyne City on Saturday and from Boyne City to Charlevoix on Sunday. This year the legendary party and overnight shenanigans in Veteran's Park was traded for quieter picnics, some very fine dinners in downtown Boyne City, and each boat's crew finding their own way to honor the day while keeping our community safe. So pour yourself an appropriate beverage, find a comfortable spot, and let's enjoy some Red Fox memories and ponder our future Red Fox dreams.

Red Fox Memories

Tom Barnes and Chris Begrow



Tom: First a big thanks to the CYC board and race volunteers who made this Red Fox happen despite the challenges of Covid. So many other races were canceled out-right and it would have been a shame to have to wait another year for the 50th Red Fox.

Chris: (in regards to the first Red Fox) All summer long, sailors on Lake Charlevoix were promoting the first Red Fox Regatta coming up Labor day weekend. Boats came from all over Lake Charlevoix to Horton Bay for the weekend. After the races on Saturday we had a chicken dinner at the Red Fox Inn in Horton Bay. The awards on Sunday were at Jim Dilworth's house also in Horton Bay. The corrected times were calculated by Warren Todter using a slide rule. Warren was the best sailor on his Thunderbird. A few Thunderbirds raced, E Scow, Lightnings, Flying Scot and boats down to a 12-foot Butterfly were racing.

I was by far the youngest skipper racing my Butterfly as a 12-year-old. In July I was able to win the Venetian Regatta. The PRO Principal Race Officer was Josh Barnes who encouraged me to enter the Red Fox. I had never thought of racing adults and so Josh was a terrific mentor.

Tom: I was 8 years old for the first Red Fox and can't positively confirm I was there for the first, but certainly several of the early ones. I recall the beach party at Horton Bay and dinner at the Red Fox Inn in Horton Bay. The original race was one or two windward leewards and then a triangle in Horton Bay and from the beginning it took place over Saturday and Sunday of Labor Day weekend.

My Dad, Josh Barnes, had *Sundowner*, a 28'6" Pearson Triton in the first Red Fox. My sister and I would have been pretty useless in those days and enjoyed spending much of the race below decks napping in the V or pipe berths.

Chris: When the second Red Fox came along no boats under 16 feet were allowed. When our bridge tender, Elmer Gibson, heard this he said, "race my boat," and I did. Elmer loaned me his new Melges 16 that I sailed to Boyne City where the second Red Fox was held. The 1971 Red Fox Trophy pictured to the right was won on a borrowed boat!



Tom: I've missed perhaps 15 Red Foxes since the inception, but every race I attended has left me with stories. I remember the 1988 plane crash right at the start of Sunday's race. Then there was 6 years ago when they canceled Saturday's race for too much wind and Mark Snyder and I sailed Sunfish to Boyne anyway. A favorite memory was the photo finish against my oldest daughter Abbey with my younger daughter Lexie driving my boat. There were years with intense thunderstorms and years where we had 110 boats participating.

This year I had immediate family on three different J22's and a brother-in-law on *MadCap*. Red Fox is a great family tradition and I hope to be around and active for the 60th and maybe even the 70th anniversary.



“Pipe Up the Crew” with Red Fox Bos’n, Lynn Smolenyak

Jenny Bednar and Lynn Smolenyak

Lynn Smolenyak has been deeply involved with many aspects of the Charlevoix Yacht club including serving as Red Fox Committee Chairman. October 7th, she treated me to a journey through the archives to glean some of the rich history of our Red Fox Regatta and our club.



Lynn, you've worn many different hats, including Red Fox Committee Chair, how did your involvement with the club & the Red Fox start? I moved up here in 1993. With Josh Barnes' encouragement, my husband Noel & I joined the club in 1994. In 2001-2002 I helped Alison Joseph with T-Shirts. I served as Secretary to the Board at the time Valerie Snyder was Commodore. John Taylor was the next Commodore, and I was Secretary with him as well. John & Kim had been heavily involved with Red Fox. Over the years I have been involved with many different offices and facets of club volunteering. I like to race in the Red Fox as well. When I was Red Fox Chairman, I spent most of my time before the race organizing

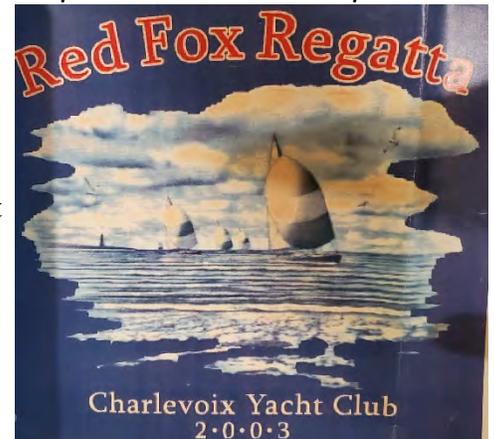
volunteers. I always had a big crew of people supporting me. What are some key turning points in the development of the Red Fox as we now know it? The Red Fox started with a group of sailors racing to Horton Bay, the home of the Red Fox Inn, thus the name. Early on, Mark Snyder organized the Red Fox, and then Tom Barnes for several years. It then became mostly a function of the board and we all worked on it together. In 2003, John Taylor was leading the sponsorship and was responsible for getting Mount Gay to sign on as a sponsor. Kim organized the party that year. We had 90 boats. 2004, we sold 400 meal tickets with 89 boats in the race. 2006 was the first year we held a T-Shirt design contest. 2006 was also the year we brought in our 1st US Sailing judge and started using Yacht Scoring.

What about our club inspires you to give it so much time and energy? Valerie once said to me, "a busy person gets things done". We enjoy the club. As a volunteer organization, it takes a great group of people to come together with a "get it done" attitude. That is really the foundation of the vibe we all enjoy in this club. I like to help people get involved, with everyone taking a little piece, we have accomplished a lot. There are over 60 members that are directly involved with making Red Fox happen. It takes all of us.

Things don't always go as planned. What was the worst you remember? There was a year with horrendous weather. We ran the NuCore on Friday, but it was dicey. We decided not to race on Saturday. There was a huge wind, 30 knots out of the west. After the issues on Friday, we weighed the options with the US Sailing judge, Andy Keiner, Eric Lind, and the race committee. Beyond the safety of the race itself, we were considering 80 boats trying to raft in Boyne City with a wind from the west. West winds create a lot of wave action on the Boyne City end of the lake. We did not want the responsibility for the potential damage. We did have the party despite the nasty rain. On Sunday some did race down the South Arm. The wind was still blowing like crazy, but there was some shelter there.

What makes the Red Fox special? There are not many races where you will see a boat like Equation and catamarans all in the same race. We are like the Chicago to Mackinaw in miniature. It is a race but it's an event. Some of my favorite memories are of the start of the race. I remember one year, Dave Cisco was on Bidick's stug, the Heather B, cruising back and forth calling the boats to the line. We had boats from all corners, all different sizes, and all different types. Pretty soon, I started seeing people I hadn't seen since the year before. After a few years of racing and race parties,

everybody knows somebody. It's a community gathering. Don't misconstrue, it's a serious race, but an opportunity for families to sail together. It's a serious, fun race with a great party!





At the Helm of the Red Fox Regatta

Jenny Bednar and Jim Abbey

CYC is an entirely volunteer organization. All of the club benefits we enjoy are made possible by the donated time and resources of our membership. There are a few members who donate many hours and take responsibility for the processes essential to the club. Jim Abbey has served in the leadership role of Red Fox Committee Chairperson for the last 6 years. Jim and his wife, Chris, joined my partner, Will, and me for a chat about life at the helm of a regatta this fall. Here is some of our conversation.

In 2005 Chris and I came up to Charlevoix and bought a condo. We joined the yacht club and started to volunteer. Lynn Smolenyak was the Red Fox Chairperson at the time. She was Red Fox Chairperson for about 10 years. Chris & I took over managing the gate on Saturday night. The Saturday party was growing and there was a need for people to check ID's, collect tickets, and welcome our sailors. We did that for 3 or 4 years. We were still living down state. I was working as an event manager for Ford Motor Co. doing auto shows in Asia. I was responsible for shows in 12 different countries. Lynn thought this experience would make me a fine chairperson.

In 2014 we moved up here full time and began taking on more Red Fox responsibilities. Lynn helped a lot in the next few years. The get together on Saturday night had started small and local. It was a "bring your own" style party. Under Lynn, around 2006/2007 the party became a bigger part. Lynn had organized it all. She had an amazing list of things that needed to be done. For the first couple years I followed her model. About 3 years ago we saw we needed subcommittees; it is too much for one person. Today we have around 5 subcommittees. People want to get involved but need guidance and a structure to work within. We couldn't pull it off without many people being involved and taking on responsibility for different aspects of the event.

Did you ever participate as a racer? No, I decided it was more important for me to be on land to problem solve.



Photo credit: Doug Baker



That's the problem, all the little things that require your attention the day of, are difficult to solve while racing.

When you started planning it, the 50th Anniversary looked a lot different than it turned out. Covid caused some major changes. How did that make you feel? Disappointed. We had a lot of plans for the 50th. Lots of things got canceled. We had to cancel music, food, our reservation at Veteran's Park. It was hard to let it go. All the suppliers and vendors were very understanding. It took me a couple weeks to put it into perspective that we were, at least, still running the race. Our sub-committees were key in making it a success. People stepped up. Many sailors came by the club to offer heartfelt thanks for having a race. In the end, the way it was handled put out a good word in the community. We had a good turn-out, people were glad to race.

Besides wonderful memories, what does the Red Fox provide to the club? The profit from the Red Fox is a big part of the CYC budget. The racing fees, clothing sales, and party tickets are about a break-even. But the sponsors make it profitable. We have lower dues than many other clubs, mostly because of the sponsorship we see for the Red Fox.

Anything else you would like to add? Thanks to all the volunteers who made the Red Fox Regatta the largest fund raiser of the year, an especially difficult year with no shore events. The following volunteers worked in preparation of the regatta and during (not in any order): John Kunitzer, Chris Abbey, Jerry Seymour, Mark Pirie, Keith Attee, Noel Smolenyak, Max Carthew, Ron Decosse, Judy Gordon, Richard Hodgson, Roger Nesburg, Beth Uehlein, Karl Lahm, Cherie Mativia, Racing Crew Members - Addison, Rosie, Stacie, Ashley, Tanner, Jeff & Mary Ann Maier, Jordon Owen, and the Irish Boat Shop. If I have overlooked anyone, please forgive me and Thank You! And thank you to all the sailing participants! See you next year!



Returning to the Red Fox

Paul Siegel



Lake Charlevoix has always held a special place in my heart for boating! Way back in the '60s of the last century, I had the opportunity to spend time with my best grade school buddy at his parents' cottage on the South Arm of Lake Charlevoix. They had a permanent two-slip dock where they tied up a Chris Craft Roamer cruiser and a sweet 20' Century. On that inboard engine run-about, we would explore the waters around East Jordan, and dodge the Ironton Ferry to check out places like the sunken wooden schooner in Oyster Bay.

A little later in life when taking a break from working a summer job at Irish boat Shop Harbor Springs, I went on a "cruise" all the way to Horton Bay on Jim Dilworth's Pearson 30 for a delicious corn roast.

In the early '80s I sailed my first Red Fox Regatta on my Ericson 40, *Madcap*. That regatta became the must do, end of summer racing wrap up!

After a 20-year hiatus from sailboat racing, an attack of (in)sanity led to a renewed interest in sailboat racing, and the acquisition of a Farr 40. A plan was set to race the LTYC Regatta, the Beaver Island Race, and of course a return to the Red Fox Regatta! The usual light shifty breezes common on Lake Charlevoix promised a good opportunity to flex the light air, upwind muscles of *Irregardless!* But the breezy summer continued for Red Fox weekend, and the weekend was spent reaching and running along the scenic tree-lined length of Lake Charlevoix. The race Sunday featured some spectacular blasting along under spinnakers, where at one point we pegged 15 knots in a puff. I have sailed that fast before, but never on flat water! Later we supplied the spectator fleet with some dramatic broaching wipe outs! One was captured for all posterity by the talented photographer Mike Schlitt. (Note to self, never cleat the lazy guy!) His amazing print on steel hangs in a special place in my office to constantly remind me to never try to carry a big kite too long on a tight reach in puffy conditions! What a great way to end the racing season! I have already blocked off the 2021 Labor Day weekend for the next Red Fox Regatta.

Thank you Perry Irish Hodgson for soliciting this article from Paul Siegel and the photos from Mike Schlitt.





So...You Bought a Boat...Red Fox Regatta Special

Will Harrison

Boats have a way of bringing up questions. When considering the purchase of a boat you have all kinds of questions, especially questions about your sanity. Once a purchase is made the questions continue to arise, typically at an increasing rate. One of the preeminent questions a Northern Michigan boater must answer is "Am I going to sail in the CYC Red Fox regatta?"

For the past fifty years sailors from all-across Michigan and the wild uncharted shores of Illinois and Wisconsin have been answering in the affirmative. When we purchased our own boat three years ago, sailing in the Red Fox was a top priority. This brought up a lot of questions.

Jenny and I would still be 'kit foxes' when our Red Fox experience is rafted up next to the majority of regular participants. We had each sailed as crew on storied craft of yore, such as the venerable *Apothecary* and sturdy *Haiku*. Now, we had our own boat and were ready to make our own mark on this icon of Great Lakes regattas. But who will crew? Should we sail in JAM or Spinnaker? How shall we provision? What are our limitations? Many things to address. Boat ownership, it turns out, seems to be primarily an exercise in question-answering; like some giant, stream-of-consciousness SAT you never quite really finish.

Our Rookie Red Fox was everything we expected and a couple of things we certainly did not. Saturday had a moderate breeze. We had chosen to sail in the JAM fleet and had our big 165 Genoa up, ready to charge down the lake. By 'charge' I mean sail with relatively poor trim and equally poor tactics down the lake at about 4 knots. We were in sight of the committee boat, close-hauled and better trimmed when time expired at 4pm. We dropped sails and motored to Boyne City in time for the party and a slightly better performance in the Rain Gutter regatta. Much fun (and rum) was had by all. Sunday, the wind was fickle. With no genuine light air sail in our inventory we struggled along with many of the other slower, heavier boats. At one point, Jenny, exasperated on the helm, simply followed a puff regardless of where it went. The genoa filled on a beam reach, and we accelerated to over two knots as we described a broad, starboard 270-degree arc around a dead calm Tireless. As we pulled ahead of them 30 yards, the puff died. Good decision – we suspended racing and began to motor in. North of Hemmingway Point, there was a sudden 20 knots of breeze and a 2-foot swell running. The question of how much fuel we had on board had been asked before. The answer was four gallons in a six-gallon tank. However, the answer came with an asterisk-in a seaway, due to a variety of

factors, only about three gallons are usable. And, we had motored 40 minutes at high speed yesterday. Just beyond 'D' mark, the engine died. Bad decision – not having a spare can on board. We called in a favor from *Apothecary*, who at first began describing procedures for sailing into the marina. We looked at our tired crew, looked inside ourselves, and made another good decision NOT to try that on that day. *Apothecary* delivered fuel and booze, and our first Red Fox ended with a safe landing and several stories. A perfect weekend.

This year, in a year of many questions, our sophomore Red Fox saw us answering many more questions correctly, with many more good decisions. We set out Saturday with six gallons in the tank and five more in a spare can. We opted to compete in Spinnaker, given this was our best bet in light air. At the first upwind mark, we wisely decided NOT to assert our rights and allowed a faster, more likely to be competitive boat into the mark first. From C to H we DID fly the kite; then wisely took it down when a gybe began to go awry. Although we still did not cross the line in Boyne City in time, we had a much more confident and relaxing sail. On Sunday, wind predictions were 15-20, building to 30. We talked to our crew and decided to decline racing and head up the lake early. We had an amazing sail, broad reach almost all the way. We tied up in our slip just as the few leading boats were finishing. We had been on the dock only ten minutes when reports of trouble in the fleet began to reach us. *Apothecary* called and asked us to be at their dock to help as they had broken the tiller. We met them with helping hands and gin and tonics. They really didn't need the hands, but the G & T's were very welcome. Other boats broke things, some small, some major in what proved to be one of the fastest, and windiest Red Foxes ever. What a difference a year makes!

Boat ownership will always present a myriad of questions and decisions. For some, including us, the decision to race at all or simply cruise is one. However, I sincerely hope that everyone reading this will decide at some point to participate in a Red Fox. Whether you compete as a sailboat skipper or part of a crew, volunteer your power boat to set marks, or volunteer your time to help run the event, the next half-century of the Red Fox regatta is sure to be one of the best decisions you can make.

