

## HISTORY OF ALAMITOS BAY YACHT CLUB

The history of Alamitos Bay Yacht Club is rooted where the club itself still stands: on Alamitos Bay. Loosely organized handicap sailboat racing occurred on Alamitos Bay in the years after World War I, but more formalized organization was desired. On August 14, 1924, twelve local sailors and boat builders met on the upper deck of a two-story pier on Alamitos Bay and founded what became Alamitos Bay Yacht Club. It was nearly two years later, on May 30, 1926, that ABYC was formally organized. ABYC was incorporated within the laws of the State of California on January 28, 1928.

Prior to World War II, ABYC met in a number of places, including S.W. Holmers' loft or the Rialto Hotel, both on Alamitos Bay. A clubhouse was built in 1928 on a leased lot on the Bay but it was closed during the Great Depression; an old barge was converted to a clubhouse in 1937 and moored on Alamitos Bay, but was abandoned after being damaged by a storm in 1939. When there were clubhouses, meetings were held there and races were organized and run from them; when there was no clubhouse, ABYC meetings were held in members' homes and regattas run off the beach.

Racing was held exclusively on Alamitos Bay--a bridge blocked egress from the Bay for rigged sailboats--and reaching starts and finishes were the norm, with boats threading their way among anchored yachts and speedboats that plied the Bay. One-design racing began with the introduction of the Patricia Skimmer, a sloop-rigged scow well suited for the shallow waters of Alamitos Bay. Among the ABYC events that date from this time are the regattas of the Holiday Series, held in conjunction with Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day and Thanksgiving; in those days they were three-day events and included the holiday as well as the adjacent weekend.

World War II shut down most yachting activities in Southern California, and ABYC was dormant during the war years; in 1945, however, members held a meeting on the beach to restart club activities. By 1948, so much interest had rekindled that a clubhouse was needed. A surplus building was moved to a location in the western end of Alamitos Bay leased from the City of Long Beach. Members drove pilings into the sand and water by hand to hold the building, its attached deck and a pier, and built a loft, two dressing rooms and a rudimentary galley. That facility still stands in that location and is the headquarters of the City of Long Beach Department of Parks, Recreation and Marine sailing programs, the Leeway Sailing Club and Gondola Getaway.

Racing exploded on Alamitos Bay in the postwar years. Skimmers were joined on the Bay by such classes as National One-Design, Snipe, Penguin, Thistle and the Naples Sabot, which had been developed on Alamitos Bay during the War; later, fiberglass boats like the Lido 14 and fiberglass versions of Snipes and Penguins began racing at ABYC. The removal in 1955 of the bridge that blocked passage in and out of the Bay allowed racing in the Long Beach Outer Harbor off the Peninsula. ABYC's popular Holiday Series made ABYC a favored destination for Southern California racers; the 1957 Turkey Day Regatta hosted 190 boats in 18 classes, including six classes in the Long Beach Outer Harbor off the Peninsula, and was the largest ABYC regatta to that date.

It was also during this period that ABYC came into national and international prominence. National or North American championships in a dozen different classes were hosted by ABYC over the next few years. The club organized and staged the inaugural Olympic Classes Regatta in 1961, the first such event of its kind anywhere in the country that became the preeminent Olympic regatta for the next 20 years.

The combination of the rapid growth of recreational boating in Southern California, activities of Alamitos Bay Yacht Club and other yacht clubs and the development of the Alamitos Bay Marina by the City of Long Beach both showed the need and gave the opportunity for a newer, larger home for ABYC. A location at the end of the Peninsula adjacent to the planned Basin Five of the Alamitos Bay Marina was selected, and on August 16, 1962, the Long Beach City Council approved a 25-year lease for use of the property to Alamitos Bay Yacht Club. A building committee drafted plans for a two-story clubhouse building and adjacent boat storage and launching facilities, lawn and patio; groundbreaking took place on March 1, 1964, and the site was used even while construction was under way.

Throughout the Sixties, racers from all over the United States and North America came to ABYC. ABYC hosted the Dragon North Americans and Dragon Olympic Trials in 1964, the same year the club hosted part of the SCYA Midwinter Regatta for the first time. National and North American championships were held for such diverse classes as Cal 20, Enterprise, Finn, International 14, OK Dinghy and Victory, and regional championships for such classes as Pacific Catamaran (P-Cats), Soling and Thistle were held. The club began to earn a national reputation for great regattas and became the first yacht club in the United States to win the St. Petersburg Yacht Club Trophy for excellence in race management for running the 1968 Snipe Nationals.

The new facilities led to an explosion in both membership and activities. In this period the membership was expanded to a closed membership of 421, and both Independent Junior and Intermediate (now Yachting) memberships were established. In 1970, the City of Long Beach and Alamitos Bay Yacht Club signed to a new lease on the grounds and buildings extending to August 15, 2022; in consideration of this new lease, ABYC agreed to new improvements. A single-story, concrete-block annex building was built in 1974-75 that included a large multi-purpose room, race committee rooms and offices and men's and women's restrooms; it was named "the Quarterdeck."

The increasing recognition of ABYC led to the running of the 1974 Finn Gold Cup, ABYC's first Worlds; it was followed by the Tornado Worlds in 1977 and the I-14 Worlds in 1979. ABYC also hosted the Mallory Trophy regatta, won by ABYC members, and national and regional championships were held in such classes as 470, 5-0-5, Cal 25, Coronado 15, Coronado 25, J/24, Laser, Lido 14 and Tempest. ABYC's junior program began to flourish at this time as well; ABYC Juniors won titles in Lido 14, Naples Sabot and Snipe classes while ABYC junior John Shadden won the USYRU junior doublehanded Bemis Trophy twice, in 1978 and 1979.

The next challenge faced by Alamitos Bay Yacht Club was the upcoming 1984 Yachting Olympics. With the regatta to be headquartered in Long Beach and raced on San Pedro Bay, ABYC became the focal point of preparation for the 1984 Games. The Olympic Classes Regatta, then entering its third decade, became the Pre-Olympic Regattas in 1982 and 1983, and ABYC members were key personalities in the Olympic Classes Regatta Organizing Committee (OCROC), responsible for the 1984 Olympic Regatta. Alamitos Bay Yacht Club hosted the 1984 Star and Soling Olympic Trials, and joined with Los Angeles Yacht Club in running one of the four racing circles for the 1984 Games.

1985 saw a major redecoration of the Clubhouse and Quarterdeck, and the racing world continued to come to ABYC. Yachting Magazine held the prestigious One-of-a-Kind Regatta at ABYC that year; the SCYA Manning Regatta was permanently moved to ABYC; and the intercollegiate Rose Bowl Regatta was begun. ABYC also was a founding club of the Yacht Clubs of Long Beach Charity Regatta benefiting The Children's Clinic, which event continues to allow the sailing community to benefit the community at large. ABYC also hosted the USYRU singlehanded and doublehanded women's championships in 1981 and the O'Day Trophy regatta for the second time in 1982 as well as the intercollegiate dinghy championships (1982), the Snipe North Americans (1984) and the Finn Nationals (1986). Several classes made multiple appearances at ABYC in the decade, including the Cal 20 Nationals (1981 and 1986), the Lido 14 Junior Nationals (1986 and 1987) and the Etchells PCC's (1987 and 1989). ABYC was recognized for its outstanding regattas by being awarded the St. Petersburg Yacht Club Trophy for the second time for the running the 1981 Snipe Worlds and by being named USYRU One-Design Club of the Year in 1989.

Junior sailing continued to thrive in the Eighties, and Alamitos Bay Yacht Club Juniors helped keep ABYC on the international map. In one remarkable year--1982--ABYC juniors held two of the three USYRU junior-championship titles, the Snipe Junior national and world championships and the Naples Sabot Junior national championship; John Shadden and Ron Rosenberg had won the IYRU World Youth Doublehanded Championship title in 1981. ABYC adults, too, excelled throughout the Eighties; titles earned included the Mallory Trophy (1982), the Prince of Wales Bowl (1985) and class titles in Coronado 15, Coronado 25, Etchells, Laser, Lido 14, Naples Sabot, Olson 30, Snipe and Tornado catamaran. Three ABYC members were on the 1988 US Olympic Sailing Team, and two brought Olympic medals home from Korea: Allison Jolly won the Gold medal in the inaugural women's 470 event while John Shadden brought home Bronze in the men's 470. In all, the Eighties marked the high-water mark in the racing and race-management history of Alamitos Bay Yacht Club.

The end of the Eighties, however, brought challenges: an aging infrastructure and a declining economy reduced ABYC's opportunities. The club replaced its Race Committee Signal Boat while the City of Long Beach undertook a project to shore up the failing seawalls in Basin Five. Strict budgetary controls and reserve accounts were put in place, a special assessment was laid for the first time in more than a decade to pay for much-needed repairs, improvements and replacements, and a Finance Committee was put into place. ABYC endured the poor economic times but suffered a decline in memberships: for the first time in decades, memberships in ABYC went wanting for takers.

Nevertheless, the Nineties saw more major sailing events come to ABYC. The club hosted a total of four World Championship regattas in the decade: the IYRU World Women's Championships in 1991, the Tornado Worlds in 1993, the A-Class Catamaran Worlds in 1997 and Melges 24 Worlds in 1999. The club also hosted the yachting venue for a U.S. Olympic Festival, the US SAILING/Nautica Youth Championships, the ICYRA Collegiate Nationals and the Hinman Trophy team-racing national championships during the decade, as well as national or regional championships for such classes as 5-0-5, CFJ, Cal 20, Coronado 15, Etchells, I-14, J/24, J/120, Laser, Naples Sabot (both Junior and Senior), Snipe, Star and both Prindle and NACRA catamarans.

ABYC members continued to excel through the Nineties. Pete Melvin won the 1997 A-Class Catamaran Worlds while Howard Hamlin and Mike Martin won the 5-0-5 Worlds in 1999; other titles included the US SAILING National Offshore Championship, the national Multihull Championship (twice) and the 1997 Transpac. With the maturing of many of the stars, the performance of sailors from the ABYC Junior Program was eclipsed by young sailors from other yacht clubs; nevertheless, the growing of another ABYC generation and the addition of more than 100 member families in the decade laid the groundwork for the next generation of ABYC Junior champions.

Alamitos Bay Yacht Club entered the new millennium poised to build on the excellence of the previous three-quarters of a century. New members, many of them second- and third-generation ABYC members but many who came to ABYC first as visiting competitors and returned to become members, helped the club grapple with the future. Membership was built, too, by families seeking to introduce their children to the world of boating and yacht clubs. With a strong financial basis, a legacy of challenges met in the Nineties, ABYC was ready to begin the next chapter of its history with a firm foundation for growth and continuance.

High on the "to-do" list in the new decade were infrastructure issues. Fifteen years after the last major redecorating of the Clubhouse and Quarterdeck, the club, furnishings and equipment were looking tired and broken down. In 2004 and 2005, new carpeting, flooring and kitchen appliances were installed on the Upper Deck of the Clubhouse, and the Clubhouse and Quarterdeck were repainted. Adding new members was another key goal: membership drives were successful, and a new award, the Commodore's Council, was inaugurated to recognize members who brought new blood to ABYC. But, as always, the excellence and variety of ABYC's racing program--and the resurgence of the ABYC Junior Program--continued to be the driver of new memberships early in the decade.

ABYC began the millennium by hosting both the US SAILING Junior Olympic Festival and the U.S. Multihull Championship (Alter Cup) in 2000 and ran not one but two US SAILING championships, the Alter Cup and O'Day Trophy regattas, in 2005. ABYC teamed up with Long Beach Yacht Club to run a combined and enhanced Long Beach Race Week; retooled the Olympic Classes Regatta to meet the changes in Olympic sailing; and ran national and North American championships for such classes as A-Class catamaran, CFJ, Cal 20, Geary 18, I-14, Laser, Naples Sabot (both Juniors and Seniors), Santana 20 and Schock 35. Added to this was the continuation of ABYC's traditional events, including hosting the Rose Bowl Regatta, the SCYA Midwinter and Manning Regattas, the lower-key Chapped Cheek and Halloween Regattas and the Holiday Series of Memorial Day, Fourth of July, Labor Day and Turkey Day Regattas. Turkey Day became the largest regatta run by a single yacht club from one venue in a single weekend, with over 200 boats in each year of the new decade; the US SAILING One-Design Class Council recognized the 2000 Turkey Day Regatta as the best one-design regatta of the year.

ABYC members continued the tradition of excellence, bringing prestige and trophies back to the Clubhouse from around the nation and the world. Pease Glaser won a Silver medal in the 470 woman's division in the 2000 Olympics in Sydney, Australia, while Howard Hamlin and Mike Martin won the J.J. Giltinan Australian 18 World Championship Regatta in the same harbor in 2002 and Pete Melvin scored a repeat of his A-Class World Championship in 2005. Elsewhere, ABYC members won the Cal 20 Class Championship four consecutive years, the O'Day Trophy twice, the Snipe Masters Nationals twice and were named A-Class catamaran North American champions twice.

The rebuilding ABYC Junior Program was another success story of the new decade. Blessed with renewed attention from the ABYC Board of Directors and two successive--and successful--full-time Junior Program Directors, ABYC Juniors began to appear on victory platforms at regattas up and down the coast. As the children of the Nineties became teenagers, they continued not only to excel in interclub Naples Sabot regattas but also in Laser, Laser Radial and CFJ events on both the yacht-club and high-school level.

Alamitos Bay Yacht Club is poised to enter its ninth decade of service to its members, the community and the boaters of Southern California at large. Yet, as the membership grows--and ages--the roots of ABYC remain the same: family sailing, excellence in racing and the volunteer spirit. If the history of ABYC is filled with success for both the club and its members, the future is filled with hope of more to come.