

## HISTORY

1911-1971

(written by C. Stanley Ogilvy)

(found in the 1961 & 1971 Logs)

The Star Class is fortunate in possessing a complete account of its early history, written by the one man best qualified to do the job: everyone interested in this subject should read George Elder's Forty Years Among the Stars, unfortunately out of print. Try the older members of your fleet: someone will have a copy.

For a blow-by-blow account of Class affairs of more recent years, we refer you to your own file of Starlights and Logs, and will consider here some of the more interesting occurrences of the formative years of the I.S.C.Y.R.A. We are so accustomed to the great Class which we know today that we are prone to forget its humble beginnings. The following account is adapted from the 50 year history written for the 1961 golden anniversary Log.

The history of the Star began even before 1911. In 1906 a boat called the Bug was designed in the office of William Gardner in New York. These boats about eighteen feet long, were miniature Stars, their design being very similar to the as yet unborn Star boat. The Bug was at least in part the idea of Commodore "Pop" Corry, who wanted a small one design boat within the means of the not very wealthy yachtsman who liked racing. The boats cost \$140 each, not an exorbitant sum even then. But the Bug proved to be too small and wet for comfort, and in 1910 Corry went back to Gardner to ask for a somewhat larger version. The Star was designed by the late Francis Sweisguth that winter, and twenty-two of them were built by Ike Smith of Port Washington, Long Island. They appeared on the Sound for the first time on May 30, 1911, for the Memorial Day regatta of the Harlem Yacht Club.

The original Star was not the trim vessel of today. Although the basic design has never been altered, construction methods and the care with which the boats are built have improved so much in sixty years that a 1911 model would not be recognized as a Star today. They cost \$240 and looked it. Also the rig was entirely different from what it is now. A short mast carried a long gaff almost parallel to it, and an enormous boom hung three feet over the transom. Fittings were crude or non-existent. In spite of all this, the basic superiority of the hull design began to show itself and more Stars were built. At a time when small classes were springing up and dying out every year the Star survived, with nothing to support it but its own performance and the enthusiasm of Pop Corry and a few others.

In 1914 occurred an event without which there might have been no Star Class today. At least we can safely say that without it, the organization of one design classes of all kinds would have been delayed by years or decades. This event was the arrival on the scene of George W. Elder. When he bought a Star and interested himself in the welfare of the Class, a turning point had been reached, although no one knew it then. Pop Corry was the "father of the Stars", but George Elder was the father of the Star Class Association and remained its guiding administrator for most of his life.

It is hard for us to realize today what Elder did. Not only were there no international classes or class organizations in pre-1920 days; there were not even any inter-club classes. Each yacht club had its own design of boat, which raced locally, and that was all. Against this heterogeneous background Elder conceived the idea of a unified organization with enough influence to administer the affairs of many fleets of the same class, not only in various harbors of Long Island Sound (which in itself would have been a novel idea), but all over the country and eventually throughout the world. The outline of this grand scheme was presented by Elder in 1916 but not adopted until 1922. To appreciate its scope and daring we must recall the travelling and transportation conditions of those days. Inter-fleet racing was unknown because there were no two fleets of the same kind of boat. There was no electric haul-out equipment; boats the size of Stars were always kept in the water all summer. The automobile was still a new invention; that it would ever become sufficiently reliable to handle a trailer was doubtful. Thus many of the advantages which we reap from our class organizations, which we take for granted now, depend on modern communication and transportation facilities.

Yacht racing was suspended during World War I, and in 1919 the Star was one of the few classes which put in an appearance at Long Island Sound regattas and helped revive the sport in that area. Meanwhile Stars had taken hold elsewhere, and the groundwork had been laid for Elder to make his dream an actuality. In *Forty Years Among the Stars* he says, "Five localities, that became fleets before the day was over, were represented at the meeting which launched the Star Class Yacht Racing Association. It was held at the Hotel Astor in New York City on January 20, 1922.... The constitution and by-laws were read and adopted". The International Star Class Yacht Racing Association had been founded. At that time there were 110 Stars in existence.

The first Log was published in 1922. That first issue was a 64-page pamphlet, and the second, in 1923, consisted of a 40-page supplement, to be stapled to the first one. The class rules occupied seven pages. Since nobody had ever heard of class rules before, it is remarkable that many of the original ones still survive, expanded into more than 40 pages, in the 1971 Log. Elder was able to sell \$800 worth of advertising space in the first issue. It may amuse those who are acquainted with today's publishing costs to

know that that amount paid for printing and mailing the 1922 Log, with enough left over to buy some prizes!

Commodore Corry was the first president of the I.S.C.Y.R.A., but by temperament he was not suited to an executive position. He was much more at home as Honorary Commodore, an office created for him in 1924 and which he held until his death twenty years later. George Elder, who had been Secretary-in-Chief, took over the presidency in 1924 and held the class reins in his hands for the ensuing quarter of a century. The way the class was run in the early Elderian days is indicated by the following frank remark from his book: "These changes (in officers) necessitated a lot of amendments. The most important were to confer powers upon the president that had previously been vested in the Secretary-in-Chief". In short, the vital thing was to be sure that the powers were vested in G. W. Elder. For a long time he was the I.S.C.Y.R.A. He wrote and re-wrote the rules. It was easy to amend the class constitution: the vote of a bunch of tired delegates at an annual meeting was all that was required. One suspects that on many occasions George did not even bother with that formality. Today it is quite another matter. Amendments must be presented long in advance, thoroughly aired and debated, and ultimately adopted only if approved by a mail ballot of the active membership all over the world.

It is obvious that anyone who runs anything the way Elder ran the Star Class is bound to have almost as many enemies as loyal supporters. Those on the inside who knew what he was doing generally approved. To many others his high-handed methods seemed unjustifiable. There were doubtless occasions on which his decisions antagonized many members; but somebody had to make the decisions, and in the long run his nearly always proved out. To someone less dynamic and determined, the pressure of class politicking and bickering might have been fatal. It never bothered Elder, and he pulled the Class through many a crisis by simply refusing to slow down. He ended up with an organization so strong and so firmly grounded in sound rules and procedure that it no longer has major crises; and if the road to this happy state of affairs was a stormy one, it is doubtful whether the goal could have been achieved by any more peaceful route.

Meanwhile Star racing was going on as usual. A National Championship had been sailed in 1922, and the first World's Championship (then called the Internationals) was sailed in 1923. The Class had become international that year with the addition of a fleet in Vancouver, B.C. Thus one of the main objectives was early achieved: "The purpose of the World's Championship shall be to determine annually the champion of the entire Star Class by competition among proven champions of every fleet". (Article I of the Rules Governing the World's Championship.)

In 1925 the class magazine, Starlights, became a printed monthly publication. It has appeared without a break for the past 46 years, except that during World War II publication was reduced to seven or eight issues per year instead of the customary twelve. Class officials feel that Starlights, which goes to every one of the 3,000 members all over the world, has always been a strong bond contributing to that feeling of unity and fellowship so important to any thriving organization, especially to one whose members are so widely distributed.

The 1926 International Championship series produced an incident worthy of record. The races were then being conducted by individual clubs, inasmuch as no one had ever thought of such a thing as a class committee. The august New York Yacht Club held one of the races and apparently botched things rather badly. Because the New York Yacht Club never bothered to justify its actions, we have inherited a somewhat one-sided story of the incident. Only three boats got around an abbreviated course with drifting marks in a half-gale of wind. The rest of the fleet never got to the starting line, not because they couldn't, but because they had been ordered by someone they thought was a race committee official to remain at anchor in a cove. As a result of this fiasco the race committee tangled with you guessed it G. W. Elder, who, as president of the I.S.C.Y.R.A., ordered the race re-sailed. He had had the foresight to write into the rules the power to do so only the year before, against the possibility of just such an emergency. In 1927, and forever after, the World's Championship has been run by a sponsoring club; but the races themselves are conducted by a committee of Star men, strictly under the rules and regulations of the Star Class.

The World's Championship began to travel around. It was won in 1926 by Comstock and Gidley of Narragansett Bay, to be taken away from Long Island Sound for the first time. Since then it has been all over the world. In 1960 it was held for the first time in South America, and it has been sailed ten times (including three of the last four) in European waters.

In 1925 the idea of District Championships was born. Later Continental Championships became events almost as important as the World's, which continues to take the limelight, but only once a year, in between are scattered plenty of other major events.

During the 1930's the outlines of a new era in Star racing began dimly to take shape. It can be described in one word: trailers. They were cumbersome four-wheeled affairs at first, home made from old auto chassis; but they enabled Stars to be hauled overland at little expense, and limitless new horizons were opened up. No longer was one restricted to racing in waters within towing distance of one's own club. The idea of land travelling did not fully take hold until after World War II with the advent of the modern two-wheeled trailer. Today all major Star areas have adequate launching

facilities; and boats from widely scattered localities get together and race each other many times during the summer. It is the World's Championship idea all over again on a lesser scale, and it immensely improves the calibre of both the competition and the handling of the races.

The gaff or sliding gunter rig was changed to a marconi (Bermudian) rig in 1921, without, however, any change in the shape of the sails. Old sails could even be used on the new spars. 1929 saw a second change, when the boom was shortened and the mast lengthened to their present dimensions. This change, opposed by some in the United States at the time, was obviously essential to modernize the appearance of the boat, and resulted in the acceptance of the Class throughout Europe, where there are now more Stars racing than even in the U.S.A. Later the "flexible rig", in use today by every racing yacht in the world to a greater or lesser extent, was pioneered by the Star Class.

Ending from 1961 Log:

Since World War II the appearance of the boat and its fittings has become fairly stabilized, by a process of trial and error and elimination. Most skippers favor a single wide spreader and a headstay, although there are many minor variants. In the 1930's a craze of gadgetry swept the Class, but by now most of the gadgets have been thrown overboard and simplicity is once again the keynote. One of the most practical recent innovations, popular in many classes, is the self-operating bailer.

Superiority in Star sailing is well distributed through all areas. Not since the earliest years has the World's Championship been monopolized by the fleets of the United States east coast. In fact, it has been won by a skipper from this area only four times since 1931. At present the trophy is enjoying a sojourn on the U.S. west coast, where it has been under the control of the Californians for the past four years. During three of these it was won by the present title-holder, Lowell North, a record never before achieved in the Class's history. (Italy's Agostino Straulino has held the title three times, but not within a single four-year span.)

In 1932, Stars sailed for the first time in the Olympic Games, at Los Angeles. It is the only class to have been included in the schedule of every Olympiad since then, and is probably now a permanent fixture. In 1932, 1948 and 1956 the gold medals were won by Americans. In 1936 Germany won, and in 1952 Straulino for Italy. Last year the Russian Timir Pinegin startled the Class and the rest of the yachting world with his clear-cut victory at Naples.

In 1961, with 4,300 boats in existence in 32 countries, the Star Class looks back over half a century with what it considers pardonable pride. Its steady growth continues: about 150 new boats are built every year. The remarkable thing is that the hull, designed in 1911, is still fast, sporty and a joy to sail. It competes successfully in appearance and performance with designs fifty years newer, and Star men see no reason why it should not continue to do so for the next fifty years. Today the racing emphasis is about equally divided between local fleet affairs and big-name series, with plenty of skippers interested in both. The Class organization, headed by President Paul Smart for the past eight years, functions more smoothly than ever before, and remains, as it has always been, the model to which all other international classes look for guidance. Most important, all the high officials of the Class are true-blue racing men. They never become so involved in organizational red tape that they overlook the purpose of the whole thing: to promote more and better racing throughout the world. The first fifty years are said to be the hardest. Whether that is so or not, the Star Class looks forward to the next fifty with enthusiasm and confidence. On to 2011 !

#### Ending from 1971 Log

The past decade has seen several major modernizations of the Star and its equipment, to maintain the position of leadership that the boat has always enjoyed, even in this era when a dozen new designs appear every year. Fiberglass has been adopted as an alternative hull material. Flotation is now compulsory, as insurance against the rare occasions when a boat swamps. The "decksweeper" jib has proven superior to the former high cut clew. Aluminum spars have been approved. Hiking straps are now legal for skipper and crew. Many miscellaneous items in the rig and on deck are tried every year, and as one succeeds now and then it becomes popular. On the other hand, ultra-expensive electronic devices are barred. Thus progress and development continue, under the watchful eye of the Class authorities, whose objectives are to maintain an absolutely top-flight boat at the world's highest performance level without allowing costs to get out of control.

There has been increasing (perhaps undue) emphasis on Olympic yachting in recent years. The Star Class, which has now been in the Games for forty years, thereby incurs certain obligations; and in 1968 we omitted our World's Championship for the first time in history in deference to a request from world yachting authorities.

Partly in connection with the Olympic emphasis there has been a certain amount of class jumping and visiting by the world's top skippers, a very few of whom possess the rare ability to step from one class to another and excel in all of them. The Class is proud to number among its members several America's Cup skippers. As always,

however, the vast majority of Star sailors, young and old, on every level of competition, continue to devote their thoughts and energies to the boat and to the Class that have become such a large part of their lives.