

Chapter 6 - Strong Growth

The Thistle was demonstrating that she now was a force to be reckoned with, and the following years saw consolidation of gains in many areas. Each year brought forth some new and interesting developments, and '52 was no exception.

For openers, in 1952 Chet Tingler's *Sandpiper* came out on top of a tie with Dick Brainard's chartered *Gay Gal* in the 4th Winter Championships at Miami. They were followed in turn by Howard Boston, Ding Schoonmaker in *Bumblebee*, and the Marquardts.

At the O.I.-C.Y.A. Regatta in June, with 22 entries, Boston, Spangenberg and Hanson finished one-two-three, and at Put-in-Bay the I.L.Y.A. Regatta saw another Boston triumph, this time over George Butts in *Flogeo* and Jim Johns in *Skim*. Howard sure was tough in those Ohio events! However, he wasn't eligible for the forty-boat Lake Erie District Championships at Cleveland, and that one wound up in another virtual tie, with Leatherlips' Jim Johns edging club-mate Hank Cowgill sailing *Tickle*. Hendricksen and Lovett trailed the two leaders, and English RAF skipper Charlie Nance did well with a first place and a second, falling to 7th overall as the result of a bad second race.

Dick Brainard parlayed three second places into victory in the L.I. Sound District Championships on the Hudson River at Nyack, N.Y. to nose out Tiny Duys by a point, and Walter Lawson copped the Central Atlantic Districts at Baltimore, beating out the Marquardts for first place.

Pleasant anticipation on the part of those looking forward to the 1952 Nationals at Sandusky that year turned to sorrow at the news of the untimely death of Lake Erie District Secretary Carl Bennett, for whom one of our Nationals trophies has since been dedicated. The Nationals went on, sadly, without Carl, and this was the one Ohio event which eluded Howard Boston. The winds for this series were, until the final race, relatively moderate and even on the light side at times. But the fifth race came in on the wings of a stiff northeaster which turned things around drastically. Lawson, the Marquardts and Hewitt - Chesapeake sailors all - enjoyed the early light zephyrs, but by the fourth race, Sandy was on top of the heap, with

a 3 1/4 point over Hendricksen. As at the '47 Nationals, the last race proved Sandy's undoing, and he was unable to contain Blac Jac in the heavy going, taking a disastrous sixth to Hendricksen's victory. The Marquardts again put in a good performance to wind up in third place in the final standings, Charlie Nance sailed his Kiltie very consistently to a fourth series spot, while another Dayton skipper, Jim Townsend, placed fifth. Individual race winners were: the Marquardts; George Devlin of Detroit; Sandy; another Detroiter Link Wheeler, and Hendricksen. Thirty-seven Thistles raced in this Nationals.

At the Annual Meeting the dues were increased to six dollars, and the following officers were elected: Harry Spangenberg, President; Ron Small, 1st Vice-President; Roger Waite, 2nd Vice-President; Les Heyer, 3rd Vice-President and Publicity Chairman; Norm Tischler, Secretary-Treasurer; and Frank Marquardt, Chief Measurer.

Yachting magazine had by this time rounded up enough new boats to conjure up action on another One-of-a-Kind regatta, and the Thistle returned for another crack at the marbles, this time with Bill Heintz and Frank Greenman aboard, and against a much larger field of boats. Perhaps one point should be made here. In these events, the Thistle always sailed according to her own class rules, and some of the competitors did not see fit to do so. For example, they would reduce the number in the crew for light airs, and increase it when it blew. Further, the new prototype craft were oft times skinned out, and not at all representative of the production models which were to follow them. In any event, the leaders in this OOK were the C Scow, Rebel 22 and the Highlander. The Thistle took a 12th and 10th (out of 28 boats) boat-for-boat which corrected to a 7th and 6th.

At the end of two races, she was 10th boat-for-boat and 4th corrected. However, any hopes which may have been held of sweeping to victory in the final race were dashed by a capsize, and that was the old ball-game. This dropped her to 12th final (corrected) standing, and prompted "I told you so's" from two opposing sources. The anti-planing-boat people seized upon the incident as proof of "unseaworthiness", especially since the Inter'l 14 also capsized in that race. Sandy pointed to the fact that the Thistle's trouble stemmed from a fouled mainsheet, whereupon he reaffirmed his stand against trick sheeting devices and cleats.

The year marked another interesting venture, revolving around the I.Y.R.U. quest for a two-man centerboarder. Ding Schoonmaker and Sandy sailed the Thistle in Holland against the best the Europeans had to offer in cold, rainy and squally weather with frequently tremendous winds. Under these circumstances with only two aboard the Thistle gave a good account of herself but — although much admired by those who witnessed her performance — she eventually lost out in favor of another boat designed more specifically for that event.

During the year, the following letter bearing a Newport News postmark was received at *Bagpipe* headquarters:

"Hearing you edit a little paper for the thistle boat people, I figure you might be a good one to pass around the word of a first-class thistle boat for sale at \$300 no questions asked. It is in good shape and needs no painting and has nylon sails that are like new except for a bullet hole in the shell and one in the centerboard trunk but I figure they can be plugged easy. There were two paddles, anchor, 2 cushions, a boom crutch, pliers, and a winging boom in the boats when we got it, and will be thrown in for \$10 extra. It belong to a couple of donkeys in Maryland before they ran into us, but they got no more interesting boats if you know what I mean, no nobody worry about them kicking. Anyhow, you can change the number enough, and paint it different. We go it hid good in a shed I can't say where, but anyone interested come to River Road Tavern, 1901 West River Road, Richmond, Virginia and night after 8p.m. and look for a fellow got a brass ring in one ear. Ask him Say, you got a match and he'll say Come to my car and we'll see. This is the word and he will bring you in his car to where we got the boat. Nobody who don't ask no questions needn't worry, but those who do might join those donkeys from Maryland. Have \$300 in cash no checks please. Anybody interested in other boats might look over some others we got namely a small cruising and some outboard runabouts. We also hope to have some more thistle boats by next fall."

....they were men in those days, son...

Chet Tingler, sailing *R-Clan*, posted another win in the Winter Championships on Biscayne Bay to start off the '53 season, topping Dick Brainard in an 18-boat field. Early that year Fleet 52 was chartered in Fisher's Island Sound, and several new fleets were on their way in California, plus that now-famous outfit at Red Dragon in New Jersey. This was the same year when a violent storm hit the Atlanta area and almost wiped out the Thistles of the fast-growing Fleet 48 in their berths, in one swoop. The South endured this, and rose again.

Jim Townsend and Charlie Nance ran one-two in the Ohio Interclub Y.A. Regatta at

Buckeye Lake in June, and Nance follow up with another second at Larchmont Race Week, with Brainard the winner. Harry Sindle was making his presence felt with a triumph in the Central Atlantic Districts, ahead of the Marquandts, while Jim Johns, George Butts and Jim Hendricksen took the top three places in that order at Sandusky in the Lake Erie Districts. Hal Wheeler won in Michiana, and Bill Nixsen's *Glue Pot* (113) topped Jim Townsend's *Feather* at Put-In-Bay.

The Nationals moved to Racine, Wisconsin that year in a series marked by some unique experiences. Hank Cowgill's *Tickle* burned up on her trailer en route from Ohio, as a result of a bit of carelessness with a lighted cigarette thrown from the tow car; Hank arrived at the regatta with a bag of fittings and that was all - he wound up sailing a chartered boat. Howard Boston was driving towards victory in the third race when his mast let go, ostensibly due to overloading from the tightly-set vang on a tough beat. And the Marquandts were eliminated when Chuck Williams' *Pusat Tasek* tangled with the line anchoring the weather mark (a moored dinghy); when finally freed, the dinghy swooped down on them and tagged them out before they realized what was happening. Meanwhile, Brainard was making hay at the helm of *Brer Rabbit*. He jumped off to a first race win, and didn't finish below fifth thereafter, to beat Sindle aboard *Vim II* by 5 points, and Sandy by 10. Tony Herrmann and Jim Johns took the next two places, with remaining individual race wins going to the Marquandts, Sandy, Sindle and Johns; Brainard's series was 1-5-4-3-3 in a 31 boat fleet.

At the Annual Meeting, Sindle led the fight to get hiking straps approved, but they didn't make it that year. New officers elected were: Ron Small, President; George Hamilton, 1st Vice President; John Stevens, Atlanta Ga. 2nd Vice President; Les Hayer, 3rd Vice President; Jack O'Shea of Atlanta, Secretary/Treasurer; and George Devlin, Measurer, a post he was to hold in distinguished fashion for several years.

The TCA was going great guns; there were regattas around the country, and more on the way. On top of that, we were attracting top drawer talent from all sides, and were looking forward to redeeming ourselves in the next One-of-a-Kind series.