

2020 Annual Meeting

August 18th, 2020

Officers' Reports

President's Report

Tom Hubbell

The Thistle Class at 75 Years – We're Thriving!

This July we launch a new Thistle Class Association website. We thought this would be an appropriate time to look at how things are going, especially since the pandemic has turned our usual sailing season into a time of reflection.

Enduring the challenges of the virus

I believe our Class is strong despite the effects of the pandemic. We had to erase from the calendar most of those big and little regattas we had hoped for this season. Thistlers are being quite creative in modifying club, fleet, and personal sailing activities to rediscover sailing's effect on personal rejuvenation. I have heard some funny stories about families as they are "forced" to sail together again.

I have no specific information on this, but I assume that some of our sailing family have been made ill by the virus, and I truly hope all have fully recovered. We are also aware that the recession of 2020 must certainly be taking a toll on everyone, one way or another. To those sailors who are front line health care workers and first responders, thank you! The virus has reminded us of your contribution.

Growing our reach through marketing

The milestone we celebrate this summer is the opening round of a grand marketing project. We contracted with Shedden Marketing which brought us Nicole Finefrock Shedden, who is a talented insider to be sure. She has helped us gain insights about what makes the Thistle Class so strong. That led to a carefully designed messaging plan and includes website redesign with the assistance of Inshore Marketing. In addition, she has created a social media strategy and is training contributors to keep this avenue vibrant and appealing. We certainly welcome feedback for continually improving all this important voicing of the class.

Celebrating our class magazine

For decades we have enjoyed having the gold standard of class magazines. With John Duckworth as our tenured editor, we can be proud of the continuing excellence of the Bagpipe. The photos, layout, accuracy, reliability, articles and regatta reports he assigns and collects from the sailors are superb. We take it as a normal journal, but I assure you, no other class comes close.

Investing in our younger Thistlers

We can also be proud of our program for helping younger teams attend the major events including the interdistrict and mid-winter championships and the nationals. Skippers under 27 years old can ask the 3rd VP to reimburse their registration fee after attending the regatta. I believe this is a highly effective investment in the future of the class; this “Youth Gotta Regatta Money” gets younger sailors to the regattas. We experienced rapid fund-raising success together with our anonymous matching donor’s generosity this shows the commitment of our members to growing and preserving the Thistle-sailing lifestyle. With that in mind, I am issuing a challenge. How many regattas in the next year can draw more skippers under 27 than the number of skippers over 49? I call it the *26/50 challenge*.

Diversifying the Thistle family

There is more going on in the country and we must not ignore it. As we can plainly see, recreational sailing in the US has a long way to go if it is to achieve the diversity goals reflective of the nation as a whole. Community sailing programs around the country are superb demonstrations of breaking down the real and the unwritten barriers that have limited access for people of color to the sport. Reading about the experiences of Black people in America, it is clear to me that white folks really have no idea how pervasive discrimination is. In Scuttlebutt, an online sailing news publication on June 21, Nate Fast (a white guy,) wrote a piece about racial diversity in sailing. Quoting in part, “If we stand against injustice on the race course, ask for equality on our waterways, and advocate to protect our rights to a clean planet are we brave enough to uphold those values on land? For the incessant talk about growing our sport, where is the talk of growing the number of people and families who are secure, can afford, and have the time to go sailing?” The Thistle Class can make a concerted effort to be welcoming to everyone. We can do the right thing by being open to everyone as we reach out and bring new people to our sport. Everyone through the centuries wants the same things in life: food, shelter, love, purpose, and play. Let’s openly share what a jewel we have in the play of Thistle sailing.

2020 Annual Meeting notice

Looking ahead, the Annual Meeting will be conducted online, August 18, at 8 PM. To avoid conference call interference, fleet delegates will receive connection information and any other members can request this also from Joy Martin at thistleclassassociation@gmail.com.

2021 Midwinters East schedule update

We will have a slightly different schedule at 2021 MWE in St. Pete. Thistle arrivals can begin the afternoon of Monday, March 1st. Practice/coaching would be Monday afternoon and Tuesday. The regatta will start on Wednesday and run thru Saturday (3/3 - 3/6) with the awards banquet Saturday night. Departure on Sunday, March 7th.

2021 Nationals update

The 2021 Nationals will be our 75th and we will convene at the Cleveland Yachting Club, Fleet #1, the first week of August. It will be doubly festive after what we have seen this year. It was obviously the right call to bump it a year forward and the folks in Cleveland have been great about this whole business.

Welcoming a new boat builder and keeping GMW for parts and advice

For 45 years, Doug Laber, Great Midwest Yacht Company, has been the preeminent Thistle builder in the country. Last year, Doug announced that he was making his last complete boat. He intends to continue to supply parts and advice, (and as he says, some bad jokes.)

We have found a new builder for the class thanks to the work of John Howell and Jack Finefrock. We believe the new builder has the skills and experience with wood and fiberglass to make quality boats. He is Alex Venegas, owner of Beacon Composites in North Carolina. Our stalwart Chief Measurer, Chris Pollak, is working with Alex to ensure that the product meets our specifications and expectations.

Let's go sailing!

I have enjoyed meeting with your fully engaged executive officers monthly by video conference working on these issues. For now, let's *just go sailing* any way that we can in 2020. Be safe on the water and ashore, enjoy your Zoom fleet parties, and share our new website with everyone.

1st VP Report

John I Howell III

During the past year, I have focused on four items that are driven by the 2018 TCA Executive Committee Strategy Report and several (though not all) of my personal goals identified in my column in January.

1. Finding a new builder for the class (strategic project): In March I reported that Alex Venegas was very about to close a deal to purchase Thistle molds from Great Midwest Yachts. That deal was completed in April and Alex has just completed the molding process for his first Thistle.
2. Marketing effort for TCA (strategic project): Working with Warren Duckworth and Nicole Shedden, we received a proposal for a professionally led marketing effort in late 2019. The proposal was approved, and the major deliverables have been completed as of July 2020.
3. We have secured a venue for the 2022 Nationals (Jacksonville, deferred from 2021)
4. I am working with the RVP's to secure a 2023 venue that may take us to a new sailing venue.
5. Assist TCA with transition to a digital membership process by converting the format of our membership database to that required by ClubSpot.

Going forward I will work with the Executive Committee and the Governing Board to identify the next projects from the 2018 Strategy Study to pursue and continue to work on my personal goals for 2020.

Report from 2nd VP – Warren Duckworth

Bagpipe

The Bagpipe is going strong with articles even without many regattas, but we are looking for what sailing people are doing instead of regattas this year. Pictures with what your fleet is doing to sail and stay safe would be great to get published. Even fleet racing needs to include crew names, even brand new sailors like to see their names in print with a picture in the Bagpipe. The next deadline is September 1st.

Website

I hope all of you have seen our new website. Please take some time to explore and see the features. The input from you, the members of the Thistle Class, in conjunction with the marketing strategy has combined into a website we should all be proud to use and share. Here are some specifics.

Calendar

Now you can post your own events instead of asking Joy to post for you. Please add any Thistle-related events to the calendar.

- Regattas
- Training events (Coach TCA, fleet tune-ups, etc.)
- Learn to sail events (Including local club events)
- Webinars

Historically, training/tune-ups and learn to sail events have been promoted at the club level. Putting those on the calendar will give interested people more ways to engage with us than just attending regattas.

Marketplace

The revamped classifieds section will make your listing much more engaging. You can add and edit your own postings, and Mays Dickey has volunteered to help if you have any questions. You'll see the thistlemarketplace@gmail.com address on the main marketplace page. These posts have an expiration date, so we won't have years-old listings anymore. If you see someone posting a boat, sails or parts somewhere else, please encourage them to add it to the marketplace.

Find a Fleet map

Please double check your fleet listing. We asked for updated information back in May, but we didn't hear from everyone. Please let Joy know if you have updates.

Social media strategy

If you haven't followed the TCA on Facebook, Instagram or YouTube, do it! You'll find all the links in the top right corner of the website. Our team of social media posters will be doing their best to demonstrate how fun Thistle sailing is. The more you like and share our posts, the greater our reach will be.

I want to thank Nicole Shedden, Mays Dickey, Inshore Marketing and all the social media posters for all their time and effort. Let's continue to spread the word for Thistle Sailing!

3rd Vice President Report

Alison Gillum

- Last year, an anonymous donor came forward and helped us launch another matching grant program. Just like in 2018, every dollar and cent donated to the Growth and Promotions fund will be matched by the anonymous donor. However, our anonymous donor has upped the limit to \$20,000 and has extended the deadline to December 31, 2021.
- Around \$5,200 in donations have been submitted to the Growth and Promotions fund since October 2019. We might possibly have a generous \$1,000 donation coming in to add to this number.
- Despite the economy and sailing having a rough year due to COVID, there have been reports of brand new Thistlers joining the class and purchasing boats. These new members and those who join afterwards can have their first year of membership for free.

Thistle Class Association

2020 Chief Measurer's Report

Chris Pollak

I would like to start by acknowledging and thanking the members of the Measurement Committee, most of whom have been in their roles for multiple years:

Eric Gesner
Doug Laber
Larry Liggett
Chris Klotz
Bruce Zurbuchen

Our activities in the past year fall into three buckets: member questions for guidance, rule interpretations, and variances; feedback on rules and wording for the Executive Committee, Governing Board and Amendments Committee; Builder/sailmaker questions and support.

In the first bucket we provided guidance to members as follows:

- Multiple questions on which rules applied and where to find them
- Laminated planks in wood hulls – ok if same wood species
- Compass/timers -
 - combined units permitted although the CMR wording should be clarified
 - functionality of applications other than compass or timer must be disabled, not just turned off or display covered with a sticker
- Chain plate location on woody
- CB slot dimensions and tolerance. A word about this last one because the question most often asked is “What is the tolerance on XXX...I don’t see in the rules”. Chief Measurers have always answered “if no tolerance is specified, it is plus or minus the smallest increment on a normal shop measuring tape or rule. Typically, that would be 1/16 inch”.
- Permanent variance - Subject to approval by the Governing Board, I granted a permanent variance to Thistle 1230 for a B dimension of 5'-5" which is 3/8" outside the specified dimension of 5'-4 1/8" +/- 1/2".

The second bucket deals with support for our internal entities. In this regard, we, along with the rest of the ExCom, provided ongoing support, guidance, and opinions on our existing rules, their interpretations, and proposed changes. Examples include the “no appeal provisions”, Nationals dates and qualifications, Covid-19 guidelines, and a review and update for the new website “On How to Measure” article. One specific item to note was the jib halyard amendment proposal. At Sandpoint, I was advised that a competitor was using a jib pull down arrangement. I asked the competitor to disable it on the basis that there is no provision anywhere in our rules for this rigging. Subsequently we worked with Mike Gillum and the Amendments Committee to draft a change to the Chief Measurer’s Rulings which would permit pull down rigging. The point to emphasize is that if something is not specifically permitted, it must be assumed to be prohibited until an interpretation is provided by the Measurement Committee or the rule is changed by the Governing Board or Class membership. Thanks are extended to the vast majority of people who ask before doing!

The third bucket is dealing with our builders and sailmakers. The latter group has been relatively quiet although I did receive an inquiry on the use of an internal headboard in the mainsail. The Measurement Committee will be looking at that momentarily. Also, another sailmaker asked for, and was provided with the sail plan as they intend to return to Thistle sail production.

With respect to builders, a significant change is underway with the sale of the GMW molds to Alex Venegas of Beacon Composites. He is seeking to become an approved builder and will purchase spars from GMW. The first hull is in the mold and expected to be popped out any day now. Alex will use an infusion process and vacuum bagging to cut down on production costs. Test panels of the layup have been received and will be compared to

panels of the existing hand layup to compare stiffness. A fully wooded boat, when completed, will be measured and assessed for aesthetic quality to ensure rule compliance. The Measurement Committee is well engaged in providing guidance to Alex to ensure his success in achieving approved builder status.

As respects mast extrusions, there is an ongoing discussion with GMW. The current extruder utilized by GMW is providing clear anodized sections which will likely be acceptable although they skirt the edges of some of our desired specifications relating to wall thickness, weight, and bend characteristics. Comparisons are underway to look at products from prior extruders and mast builders to confirm the acceptability of the current batch. If rejected, there could be cost increases and delays in the availability of new masts. GMW does have a limited stock of black anodized masts which should meet the immediate needs of the Class.

There is one final item to report. In preparation for the 2020 Cleveland Nationals, we discussed and agreed to both limit measurements and provide an option to measure at the Great Lakes. I expect that we will be able to carry this over to 2021. The measurements will be all up weight, safety equipment including hull floatation, sails, and J dimension.

Respectfully submitted,

Chris Pollak
Chief Measurer
Thistle Class Association

Report from the Secretary/Treasurer:

Joy Martin

1. 2018-2019 Tax filing.

a. Revenues	\$54,681
b. Expenses	\$23,672

2. Current bank account balances

a. General fund...	\$21,090.08
b. Growth and Promotion fund	\$ 6,144.91

3. Current Membership :608 unique memberships, Total 913 members

4. Items to note:
 - a. We launched new website thanks to Nicole Shedden/Shedden Marketing and Inshore Marketing. Many aspects of the redesign will make the Secretary/Treasurer much more efficient.

- b. Concurrently, we did a soft launch of the Clubspot Membership platform. All memberships will now be entered into this database via the website. Clubspot uses Stripe rather than PayPal for payments. Both platforms seem to be working well.
- c. The executive committee has retained an accounting expert for a financial review of the Thistle Class financial accounts. This is being done to be sure that current accounting practices are appropriate.

5. Fleet Status:

- a. 40 active fleets
- b. Fleet 4 at Edgewater YC in Cleveland requests charter renewal.
- c. Fleets on Probation
 - i. none
- d. Fleets to vote on for charter revocation
 - i. Fleet 161 Lake Monroe Thistle Fleet Bloomington Indiana
 - ii. Fleet 146 Grande Maumelle Sailing Club Little Rock Arkansas
 - iii. Fleet 47 Windjammer Yacht Club Thistle Fleet Louisville, Kentucky

TCA Nominating Committee Report

David Hudson

The 2020 nominating committee members are Wayne Balsiger, Scott Griffin and David Hudson, chairman. The Nominating Committee met by email over the past few months. Committee members were concerned that the current environment would add considerable complication to our process. Indeed this is not the best time to ask for new commitments with so much uncertainty. These facts guided our process and we chose to pursue our current officers remaining in their respective positions. We felt this would be the best course of action for the stability and continuity of the Class.

Therefore, the Nominating Committee has proposed the following officers for the 2020/21 term:

- President: Dr. Tom Hubbell;
- First Vice President: John Howell III;
- Second Vice President: Warren Duckworth;

Third Vice President: Alison Gillum;
Chief Measurer: Christopher Pollak;
Past President: David Hudson

The Nominating Committee is pleased to report that everyone has accepted our proposal to continue in service to the Class. Our enthusiastic and grateful thank you to our officers for their continuing commitment to our Class Association.

At the pleasure of the President, the members of the Nominating Committee have volunteered to remain on the committee for next year.

The Nominating Committee members would like to challenge those of you who have not served the Class in an official capacity, or want to do more, to consider doing so. We are eager to sign on some of our younger members and increase the ranks of class management and of class ambassadors. I can promise you it is a rewarding experience. If you would like to give it a try, you can contact any member of the Nominating Committee, or the Executive Committee.

Respectfully submitted,
David K. Hudson