

## **Comets Returning to NLGYC**

This year we will kick off our 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary with the 2015 North American Comet Championship on June 20 & 21. That is the weekend prior to the opening of the club, so we will host the regatta the way we often do the Lake George Open – casually with down home hospitality and good sailing. We're expecting about 15 boats, including a few loaners that will be available for those who might want to give this terrific boat a try or for those of you who might want to get back into a Comet and relive your youth.

For more than 30 years, the Comet class was one of the largest classes sailed at NLGYC, and there are still a few of these boats, designed as trailerable version of the Star, that might be found in NLGYC members' garages.

We'll need many club members to help with race committee, patrol, housing, and meals. Please contact Peter and Marion Abell to lend a hand

water\_music@comcast.com

If you are interested in sailing in the regatta, let them know, and we'll try to get a loaner boat for you.

### ***Look to the skies! It wasn't a Star, but a Comet that flashed by!***

The Comet Class Yacht Racing Association will hold its annual North American Championship at NLGYC the weekend of June 20-21. The NLGYC Executive Committee and the Comet Class have been working together on this exciting opportunity to honor a boat that played a significant part in our Club's history. It's time to uncover old boats, shake out sails, bring forth old photographs (and maybe even historic trophies), and join in the fun.

Although the club won't be officially "open for the season," Peter and Marion Abell will serve as co-chairs for the event, and Donna Wotton has agreed to chair the Race Committee. It is anticipated that about 15 boats, from NJ to MD, will be arriving to compete in the championship regatta. Your help with food, patrols, and housing will be greatly appreciated. Word is that Rick and Paula Dhein, winners of the Comet International Championship at NLGYC in 1974, when they sailed "Gin Ricky," will be racing, as well as son Clark and his wife, Lydia Dhein. Barb Rottier, the gal with too many boats, is looking to pull her Comet out of the barn for the event, and the Abells hope to charter a boat, too. The Comet Class has three loaner boats, so if anyone wants to compete in the regatta and doesn't have a boat, here is a way to have some fun. We love the Comet and what it has done for us, and we hope that you will say "yes" when we ask for help in making this regatta a success. As old melodies say, "Come, Sail Away!" "Beyond the Sea" at Lake George!

Peace and Fair Winds

Peter and Marion Abell

## **Comet Class North American Championship Coming to NLGYC**

### **ABOUT THE COMET**

The Comet was designed by C. Lowndes Johnson as a trailerable version of the Star. The design combines a 16 foot hard chine planing hull with a classic sloop rig with a distinctively large mainsail. The result is a boat that can plane downwind and on a reach in just 10 to 12 knots of wind, yet remain stable upwind. Her light weight (260-295 lbs.), generous sail area (140 sq. ft.) and semi-flat bottom, make her easily driven to weather and can be planed off the wind in breezes of only 10 to 12 knots. The Comet carries a sloop rig (mainsail and jib), the mast stands 20' 5" above the deck and is supported by a fully adjustable three stay rig. The hulls are available in either fiberglass or wood, and since 1972, fiberglass Comets have been fully self-rescuing. They feature watertight side tanks or false bottoms which are self bailing in the event of a capsize. The boat has evolved greatly since its 1932 design by C. Lowndes Johnson and has kept pace with the times. The modern Comet sports "Go Fasts" such as vang sheeting,

mast benders, ball bearing travelers, and magic boxes for mast rake control. All sail adjustments may be placed on the cock-pit coaming, to be at finger tip control from a fully hiked position. The boat carries a crew of two for racing, making it ideal for husband and wife or parent and child teams, yet it can hold three adults for pleasure sailing. The boat is easily trailered, rigged and launched. Even more importantly, the Comet is one of the most affordable one-designs in its class, with fully equipped and competitive used boats available from \$1000 to \$2,500.

**From the Comet Class website**

## **Maid Marion and Sir Sails-A-Lot**

*While communicating about the upcoming Comet North American Championship this coming June at NLGYC, former Commodore Peter Abell shared his lovely story of his and Marion's introduction to the Comet. They agreed to let us include their story in the bulletin.*

Marion and I bought Comet 3216 three months after we were married in '65 from a guy in Cazenovia, NY, for \$650. 3216 was a Lippincott that needed some updating to make it competitive. During the following winter, I was on the staff at the hospital in Waterbury, Connecticut, as a rotating dental intern and was able to work on the boat at Apley Austin's boat shop in nearby Morris.

In '66 Marion and I campaigned our comet on weekends, learning how to race and learning about each other (really!), while during the week we tried to start a dental practice at the Jersey Shore. The following year, 1967, Marion, pregnant with Kim, and I qualified to compete at the Internationals.

Racing on Canandaigua Lake, we won the Stone Trophy, awarded to the highest scoring skipper competing for first time in the Internationals. In '72 and '73 we sailed in the Lake George Open Comet Regatta, missing winning by a single point in '72 to Gene Barilla of Willow Bank Yacht Club (Cazenovia, NY). Our introduction to the north end of Lake George during those comet regattas is why we chose to buy "our little paradise" near NLGYC!

In the mid-80s the class put out a paperback memoir called something like "A Look Back at the Comet" to celebrate 50 years since the comet's creation. I gave my copy to the club, and it should be in the "library" bookcase. The book includes lots of great photos, including one of Rick Dhein out on the water shinnying up his mast to retrieve the main halyard while his crew, not sure if it was Paula, worked desperately to keep the boat balanced. There is a photo of the winners of the '68 Internationals (Atlantic Highlands Yacht Club in New Jersey) taken at a motel pool after the conclusion of the regatta. Don McPherson, Ithaca YC, was the winner, and while not a winner, I am in that shot as well.

It is too bad the class has fallen on hard times. I think the Snipe and Lightning classes have had much better class management over the years, and in addition Comets had, for a long time, a running dispute over the legality of "super boats" that had been grandfathered in. Unfortunately many of the best sailors in the class had these boats, and so it was discouraging to many sailors with "legal" boats, as it made it even tougher to beat the top sailors. When we moved to Brattleboro, Vermont, in '73, we sold our Comet to a local dentist, who took pretty good care of it. He gave it back to us in '85. We had it re-finished by Apley's successor in Connecticut and started a fleet at Spofford Yacht Club across the Connecticut River from Brattleboro in NH. About 10 years ago, Marion and I sold the boat to a guy in Mexico, New York, for \$2800. 3216 was in very good condition and still had its original wooden spars and 7 stay rig with sliding back stays. All those races and even a couple of turtles, and we never broke one!

Marion and I sailed together in many Comet regattas over the years and never won one. We got second many times, sometimes by only a point or half point. At a regatta on the Chesapeake, we were poised to win, but couldn't get across the finish line. It was a very light air race and there was a current running. We were anchored about 4 feet from the finish, but the time expired before the breeze filled in. And when it did, we sailed dejectedly back to the Severn Sailing Club. First place for me, Marion and our comet remained elusive, and it's always bothered me!

I won the inaugural Spofford Lake Open Comet Regatta in '90, but Jeff, who was around 11 at the time, was my crew. I went to Bermuda in '89 and '90 and sailed in "Race Week." We stayed with local Bermudians and sailed between parties and Dark and Stormies. It was lots of fun. Too bad this great boat, which is perfect for couples, has disappeared from our club.

Peter Abell