



## SHARED EXPERIENCES

ONE SAILOR'S CONNECTION TO HIS BELOVED ONE-DESIGN CLASS SERVES AS AN EXAMPLE OF WHY WE SAIL

**WE ALL HAVE IT:** that human fascination with the new. Even the cereal I've been eating for years is now "new and improved" (which makes me wonder whether Quaker has been selling me an inferior breakfast all these years). I digress. Our curiosity is for new, new, new, all the time. New boats, new races, new classes, new experiences — you name it. We fill our social media feeds, our websites and even the pages of this magazine with new things. And while we're all so focused on the new, it's easy to ignore the older classes, boats and fleets that the majority of racers hold near and dear.

It's true that once a year we dote on the slick new boats that show up at the boat shows, and our respected Boat of the Year awards program is essential, as it highlights the sailing industry's innovations, which advance our sailing experiences. But

**WE'RE ALWAYS KEEN TO SHARE THE SUCCESSES OF THE MANY ONE-DESIGN CLASSES THAT ARE THE HEARTBEAT OF**

I assure you, when planning the editorial for this magazine, we're always keen to share the successes of the many one-design classes that are the heartbeat of our sport.

Take for example the International Comet. I've never sailed one, but for some reason I have imprinted in my mind the image of a fleet of Comets racing on my home bay. On that occasion, at least a decade ago, I admired dozens of white triangular sails and multicolored hulls crossing tacks on a brilliant summer sea-breeze day. The scene was as remarkable then as I'm sure it would be tomorrow.

I hadn't thought much about the Comet until an engineer at Harken chose the class for the Harken One-Design Showcase in our

July/August 2016 issue. The half-page technical illustration of the boat sparked my curiosity, as I'd had no idea someone was building Comets again. So I called the contact in the listing, Talbott Ingram, the class president and devotee who races his Comet up and down the East Coast. The enlightening cold call carried on for more than an hour, and I learned new Comets are coming out of Whitecap Composites, a small shop up in Peabody, Massachusetts.

More importantly, Ingram turned me on to Kevin Buruchian, a 29-year-old who sailed Comets as a kid. Buruchian had faded away as most young adults do from such legacy classes, but today he finds himself the next-generation leader of a quiet Comet resurgence.

Buruchian didn't grow up in a sailing program with modern dinghies. Instead he started sailing with his dad at the age of 4. He was skippering the family Comet at age 5, when he won his first race. He went on to win his first Comet championship at age 11.

"I didn't have Optimists, 420s or whatever," Buruchian says, "because on our lake, Comets and Sunfish were the only boats we sailed. But sailing with my dad all the time — those are my best memories."

Three or four weekends a year, Buruchian and his father would hitch the 16-foot "junior Star" and travel to Cazenovia Lake, New York. "I can still picture getting to the lake late at night, pitching a tent and sleeping on the lawn," says Buruchian, who now lives outside of Boston. "We'd sail all day and we'd be beaten up. He'd have a few beers, and we'd just hang out with everyone. As a kid, I was always comfortable being around the adults."

He sailed with his father straight through his teen years, but when he shipped off to the University of New Hampshire, Buruchian curtailed his Comet sailing. One day, Ingram called him out of the blue and offered him a charter boat for the class's North American Championship in Lake George, New York. With a pickup college crew, he lost the championship by a single point.

"I know how I lost it," he says today, "but that's by the by."



# SAILING WORLD

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Life and work took hold, and Buruchian grew distant from, but no less fond of, the Comet. He'd been casually looking for a fixer-upper, but "no one ever wanted to sell theirs," he says, until one day, a friend of the family emailed him with a lead on a derelict boat thought to be a Comet. It had been sitting uncovered under a tree for 10 years, says Buruchian. It was full of water, but from photos, he deduced it had the desired double-bottom construction.

He bought it for \$500.

"I didn't bother to tell my wife (then fiancée)," he says. "It was a week before our wedding, so I planned to pick it up afterward."

At his wedding, however, he says "everyone kept talking about this huge gift, hinting, 'Did you open up your big gift?'"

It turned out friends and family had chipped in to buy the very boat he thought he had bought. "My dad was so happy for me to have one again," says Buruchian.

He fixed it up and soon started racing with his wife, a complete novice. They did well in a few local regattas before entering the Internationals.

"We had a blast. It was windier than I thought she would have liked, and my parents thought for sure she'd either come back smiling or never want to sail one again," says Buruchian. "We were out there in 20 knots, and when we got back to the dock, she had the biggest smirk on her face. That's the reason why I'm sailing with

the Comet class today. She'd never sailed before in her life, but now it's something we can do together. It's something she knows means a lot to me."

And so today Buruchian finds that his role with his beloved class is to get younger people into the Comet, to work with Whitecap to improve it and simplify it. "The travel culture is still a draw to the class," he says, "and there still isn't anything at a reasonable cost for people coming out of college. The Comet offers a lot of good things: It has plenty of performance, it's been around forever, and it's a boat that hasn't changed a lot, because it doesn't need to."

I know there are many stories similar to Buruchian's from countless long-forgotten, struggling or reviving one-design classes scattered about the country, which is why I'm kick-starting a regular column called "My Class, My Story." I'm eager to discover why die-hards like Buruchian remain true to their deepest sailing roots. After all, a boat is a boat, right?

Our sport's aging one-designs are really no different than the five new Boat of the Year winners featured in this issue: They're simply fiberglass objects that provide us immense pleasure, a competitive outlet and a social network for life. It's the people and the stories that make each of them unique. So I invite you to share your story, your class. Write me at [editor@sailingworld.com](mailto:editor@sailingworld.com) so I can share it and make old new again. ●



**OFFICIAL BOAT OF THE YEAR TENDER**

A special thank-you to BRIG Inflatables for supplying its Navigator 570 RIB to serve as both transfer and photography platform for our Boat of the Year tests in Annapolis. A reliable and nimble ride is essential for five days of chasing judges, safely transferring them from boat to boat, and shooting images and videos. The Navigator 570 delivered perfectly — fast and smooth. BRIG, founded by former military aeronautical engineers, is the world's largest producer of RIBs, all built in the Ukraine. To see the line, visit [siroccomarine.com](http://siroccomarine.com).

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