

A Brief History of the Detroit Cal-25 Club by Tom Schreiber(1/98)

The first Cal-25s arrived in the Detroit area in the early 1960s (hull number 8 was at North Star Sail Club). The most active local sailing for boats less than 30 feet at that time was in Midget Ocean Racing Club (MORC), Detroit Station 11. A flood of Cal-25s arrived in '68 through '72 and were quickly 'the boat to have' for MORC (I got my boat in 1968 and still race it). We sailed around the buoys and long distance including three yearly sixty milers on Lake St. Clair and an annual 139 nm race on Lake Huron from Sarnia, Ontario to Alpena, Mich.

Then tougher competition for MORC around the buoys arrived in the form of several Ranger-26s. So in the Fall of 1971 Bill Martin organized twelve Cal 25 owners into the Cal 25 Club of Detroit and succeeded in getting a start in the Detroit River Yacht Racing summer series. Many of the Cal 25 owners continued to race both one design and the long distance MORC races which made for a full schedule especially when the MORC International Regatta was held on Lake St. Clair in 1972 (over 100 boats with a limit of 33 local boats).

Until 1982 the Cal 25s sailed with 170% genoas because these were allowed in MORC with no penalty. This changed when we hosted the Cal 25 Nationals in 1982 and we all had to learn to sail in light air with our 150%. The Nationals have been held in the Detroit area every four years since with the exception of 1995 when the Detroit Cal 25 Club asked the growing fleet at Port Huron Yacht Club to host the races on Lake Huron. Typical fleets have been in the 20 to 30 boat range with from 0 to 5 out of town boats (Steve Bandy won the '82 Nationals and taught us that our 150% designed by the late Larry Klein were not competitive).

The membership of our club has varied over the years from a maximum of about 35 to the current 20. There are enough boats in the area, when we include Port Huron, so that we frequently are the largest one design class in the annual Detroit NOOD; our major competition comes from the Tartan-10s.

The main difference between our local rules and the old National rules is that we require the outboard to be at least equal in weight to a 5 hp OMC and that it be on the transom at all times. This last requirement is for safety because we sail near and in narrow channels used by 1000 foot ore boats and ocean freighters which have legal right of way.

In reviewing some old copies of the National Fleet "Seabreeze" I was surprised at how effective Warren Wright in California and Dr. Dave Bailey in Detroit and Chesapeake were at that tough publishing job, especially in the days before word processors etc. We can't expect that kind of devotion now but the Web Sites are a wonderful replacement.

The National and even the Detroit organizational rules, as written, have seldom been followed but they, like the boats, have survived. The survival of the National and local clubs has been helped by the quadrennial National Championship Regatta which increases local interest and action. It would be nice if out of town competitors were better represented but it is not easy to do. I tried it four times over the years and found it tough to get a good boat. Part of the problem is that each of us has customized our own boats and we can't adjust to a different boat quickly.

It is obvious that the Web Sites are the way to keep in touch and the structure in the old National Constitution is outmoded. If we keep these sites going, keep the one design character of the boats under control, and keep in touch, things will work out fine.

NOTE: A story about the Cal 25 and Bill Lapworth by the late sports writer and avid sailor, Goerge Van, was published in the Detroit News in 1979 when we had 20 Cal 25s on the starting line. It is excerpted below:

"Billy Lapworth would have been proud of this turnout in Lake St. Clair, his home waters. The former-Detroiter, now living in Long Beach Calif., designed the 25's, one of the most successful of his creations, which range from 20 to 65 feet.

"Lapworth learned to sail on his father's 22-foot catboat at the Detroit Yacht Club. His father, the late Charles Lapworth, an Edison Co. engineer, became his crew and they won the river catboat championship. This was no small feat in the early 1930's when more than 100 of the 22-foot cats were racing here on the river and the lake.

"Young Billy graduated from the University of Michigan as a naval architect, served as an officer in the Navy in World War II before settling down to his drawing board. His Cal-40 sloops launched him to world fame as they dominated ocean racing.

"All I had in mind was an honest sailing boat that could get to Catalina (island off of the Southern California coast) in any kind of weather in comfort and the handicap rating was no consideration"

"This was his explanation after he had won the Miami-Nassau Race and the SORC championship in the 1950's. His Cal line, all good looking weatherly sailing craft, put him at the pinnacle of yacht design.

"Most of the Cal-25 owners are unaware that Lapworth the designer is a former Detroiter. Like all the Cal designs, they're floating summer cottages that stand up and go in all weather. The ladies love them. They sell for \$9000 to \$12000." NOTE: Those prices look high but were about right at that time. George Van was a great friend of all sailors and had many experiences on Cal-25s, especially crossing Lake Erie on Calliope (hull 108), which he had named in one of his columns.

It is interesting that Bill Martin, Detroit organizer of the class and past President of U.S. Sailing, was presented with his old Cal-25 by his son for the 1996 NOOD regatta. He raced in the '96 and '97 NOODs and at other times when his Santa Cruz 70 is not scheduled. Another U.S. Sailing past President, Lynn Stedman also owned and raced a Cal-25 during the early 90's. They jointly presented the class with the Presidents Trophy for the winner of the season ending classic, North Channel Race.