

# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

I have a tarnished silver bowl in my office into which I throw business cards, paper clips and other junk. The bowl is a trophy and a reminder that once I was good at a sport—racing boats (I'm talking sailboats here). In yacht racing, you have to actually be on the water and participating to really know what is going on. This makes it the world's worst spectator sport. Another thing about racing is that it takes a crew to make a boat go, each person having a critical and necessary function. Class rules and handicaps generally level the playing field. Ideally, the crew that sails fastest and makes the least mistakes, wins.

I started on a hot boat and raced weekends on Lake Michigan, right under the Chicago skyscrapers. Each year we were the fleet champions and qualified for the nationals, where we would race borrowed boats at other yacht clubs.

My final national regatta was in Dallas. You wouldn't think inland Texas would be known for yachting, but the wind builds up across the plains until it hits these big shallow reservoirs they have down there. With no chance for chop to develop, the water stays flat and the full force of the wind fills the sails. You can really get a boat moving.

At the Dallas nationals I was the tactician. While I did not have my hand on the tiller, I decided where the boat was to be pointed.

When the last race came up, we had a lock on second place and a win would give us first. At the start, two boats got out ahead of us, and try as we might, we couldn't gain on them. We were resigned to our second place when, in the final upwind leg to the finish line, the wind shifted. It was a header driving us away from the line. The conventional tactic when this happens is to change direction with a tack. This is exactly what the lead boats did. It was now decision time for our boat. Drawing on my sailing knowledge, observation of the wind over several days of racing, and playing a hunch, I told the helmsman to hold our course. It was a long two minutes before the wind shifted back as I knew (hoped) it would. To our total amazement, the finish line was now 100 yards directly in front of us! The two boats which had been in front and did the safe thing were now on the other side of the lake with no chance of getting back. As we sailed over the line, a gun went off and the cup was ours! On this glorious day I found out just how sweet it is to come from behind and win.

Well, now my time on the RCI crew, in a race that has no end, is finished. I have been privileged to have been given the helm this past year. I have tried to read the winds and take the right tacks so that RCI is in front of the fleet and in position to win. I hope that I have not disappointed anyone, and also that you have enjoyed reading these columns as much as I have enjoyed writing them. I wish to thank everyone for their support and will be seeing you around.



**Christopher English, RRC**

# Interface

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