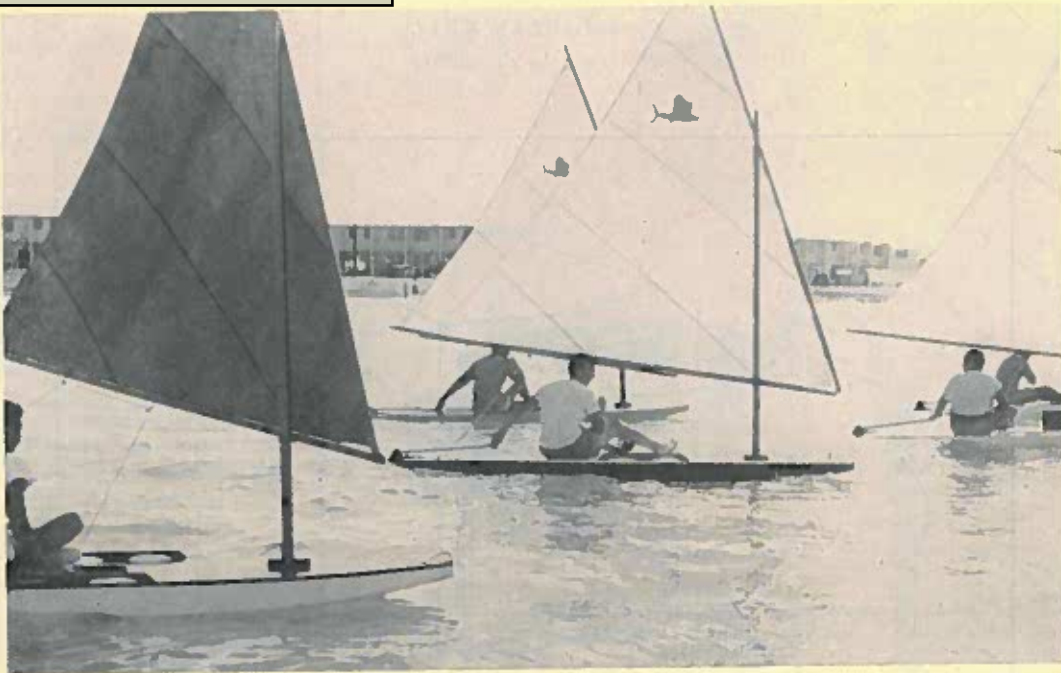


THE SOUTHERNMOST YACHT CLUB

IN THE UNITED STATES

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By JUD BROOKS



The start of the Sailfish class race at the Key West Sailing Club

Around May 1, 1953, two small sailboats met in the vicinity of longitude 81° 47' W. latitude 24° 34' N and, in the manner of sailboat owners everywhere, their respective skippers bragged of the speed and merits of their own craft. A race was considered to determine which was the faster boat. Then one mentioned inviting other sailboat skippers to participate. From there it was only a step to the suggestion that races be held often. That led to the question of how to notify and assemble the owners and almost automatically the Key West Sailing Club was born.

Well, maybe it wasn't quite that simple, but anyway the club was formed, officers elected, a constitution and by-laws adopted and the first race was scheduled for May 10 off the north shore of Dredger's Key on the Gulf side of Key West. Maybe the old pirates and wreckers resting in Davy Jones' locker perked up a bit at the sight of sailboats again in Key West waters, but, if they did, they were no doubt amused when at starting time eleven boats approached the marker. Amused, certainly not at eleven boats turning up for one race, but at the fact that no two of them were alike. A race with a Pram against a Cricket; a Rhodes Bantam against a heavy island-type sloop; a Moth pitted with a Scow and of all things a surfboard-like craft fitted with a latteen sail, called a Sailfish, competing with a Penguin or a Snipe. Even old sour-visaged Black Caesar probably smiled at this.

What do you do? How can you match eleven such boats? The answer is, you just line them up, fire a gun and sit back to watch the results. Computed handicaps—oh bother—that can come (Continued on page 136)



Family boating Sailfish style—Vice-Commodore (Navy Lt.) W. T. Fuller, wife Mary, son Butch and Jasper go for a sail

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SOUTHERNMOST YACHT CLUB

(Continued from page 47)

later. Sure, the Cricket won both races that afternoon; not only was it the fastest boat, but the owner was the most experienced.

Regardless of the outcome everyone had a good time. However, it was realized that, after the novelty of just sailing wore off, it would be no fun trying to beat a Cricket with a Pram, so the skippers assembled and tried to agree on a class boat. Some liked the Bantam, others preferred Penguins and a few still wanted to be rugged individualists and proposed to order, buy or build almost every small type boat imaginable. Confusion existed for several weeks. One Navy officer member journeyed to Miami, watched the races at Coconut Grove and bought the winning Moth on the spot. Bringing it back he had visions of besting the other Moth owned by a brother officer, only to find that it had been sold to a non-member and the brother officer had also gone to Miami and bought a Penguin. Result, the club still had one Moth.

Within a week four Penguin kits were ordered, one was delivered, assembled and in the water in two weeks. Delivery on the others was delayed. In the meantime the members had a chance to observe the other boats, not only for their sailing qualities, but for initial costs and resale values; or ease of transportation. These factors are of primary importance, as a large percentage of our members are connected in some way with the Navy, either as military personnel or civilian engineers. All are subject to transfer. So the ideal boat for them is one of relatively low first cost; and ease of transportation. In the event of transfer, they can either take it with them or, since the amount involved is small, sell it on short notice without too much damage to the family treasury.

Lt. Bill Fuller, a naval aviator and perhaps a better "sailor" than many of the "Wet Water" navymen, is the proud owner of our first Sailfish. Bill was so enthused over this little craft that he interested eight prospects. To make sure he would have some competition he took "the bull by the horns", or to be more correct, he took his checkbook and pen in hand and ordered the eight kits. He had no trouble in disposing of them at actual costs and two more kits have been ordered.

A Growing Fleet at Key West

Those who wanted something more roomy have gone in for Penguins, as they can be handled easily on one of the light trailers that sell for around \$50.

The more permanently situated members have also been active. We now boast of, in addition to the Penguins and Sailfish; two Moths; two Rhodes Bantams; one Snipe; one Lightning; one Ding Cat; and a large number of miscellaneous craft.

The club is a member of the North American Yacht Racing Union and holds races on alternate Sundays. Membership is open to anyone of good character and the club holds, rightly, that anyone interested in sailing, is of good character. The by-laws state that, "Members are in good standing when they have participated *afloat*, either as skipper, crew, official or spectator, in a majority of the sailing activities of the club during the fiscal year." This eliminates arm-chair Admirals.

Plans are being formulated for a Southernmost Sailing Regatta to be held some time early in the spring and already we are looking forward to a reunion with some of our transferred members, if they can wangle leave at that time.

One of the most remarkable things about the club is the fact that despite the great number of transfers, we always manage to recruit replacements. Maybe too, we are helping in our small way to increase interest in sailboating as less than a quarter of the transferred members dispose of their boats. They say "sell it, not on your life, I'm going to sail it in . . ." So don't be surprised to meet Sailfish and Penguins on Pontchartrain, off Newport, or Long Beach, or even on Gatum Lake flying the burgee with the Conchlike insignia of the Key West Sailing Club, the Southernmost sailing club in the U.S.A.