



## Quissett Early Birds Keep Their Sense Of Humor As Nonsense Prevails in Tune-Up Race

By JANET BURT CHALMERS

Friday, July 1, 2011

Eight crews of Quissett Early Birds rigged and ready for summer action made their way out in Herreshoff 12½ footers to compete in QYC's annual shake-down race prior to the start of the season's series and trophy races.

Of the fleet of Herreshoff S Boats, only Alan Haigh's Teaticket was in commission; so Alan and Ham Lord were forced to join the spectator fleet rather than compete in Teaticket.

Though every child learning to race is taught, "Get to the line early," some of Saturday's seasoned sailors seemed to have forgotten that dictum and wished they hadn't.



Newlyweds Jo and Alec Clowes cross the Early Bird race finish line in their Herreshoff 12½ footer *Due Diligence* with big smiles. Photo by Janet Chalmers.

Perhaps Old Mother West Wind hadn't put the Early Bird race on her calendar or was too busy elsewhere to offer the Quissett racers the usual fresh southwesterly. It was the dreaded dying northerly that promised the race committee it would hold, but of course didn't. Old Mother West Wind's Merry Little Breezes apparently escaped her watchful eye and spotted the Quissett racers in time to play tricks on both them and the race committee Saturday afternoon.

After cruising around in Cornelia Carey checking to make sure all the race marks were in place, RC co-chairs Carol Suitor and I placed two drop marks, anchored and posted an I course with the windward mark to the north-northeast and the leeward mark off the Fenlon's house in the Gansett bight. Most of the boats were in the area and had picked up their new course sheets when the RC began the five-minute starting sequence on time at 2:30. Swizzle was nearby in a breeze of her own, looking as though she might be able to get to the line in five minutes, but Sea Breeze was obviously going to be late.

For those who don't know, Swizzle was sailed by my son-in-law Ted Grayson, and Sea Breeze by my husband, Steve Chalmers. They'd have to take their lumps. The RC makes every effort to start races on time.

Tommy and Olivia First in Olivia and David Burt and Domingo Vasquez in Tag Along took beautiful port-tack starts and set out in the light breeze toward Gunning Point. What wind there was was veering into the north and occasionally west of north. Slow by slow a port tack parade formed with Swizzle crossing the line almost 10 minutes late and Sea Breeze 22 minutes late – arg!

### Whistling the Marseillaise

With Cornelia Carey stuck on the starting line waiting for the entire fleet to clear, Ted Burt proceeded to the windward mark in a QYC Whaler with (he thought) a C flag for signalling a change of course. But it was the Early Bird race and the C flag was still ashore where it had spent the winter, and Ted had a T flag. With what little wind there was threatening to go northwest or fizzle out entirely, Ted decided to set a finish line at the windward mark rather than signal a change of course with the wrong flag; however, Carol and I arrived at the mark ahead of the fleet in Cornelia Carey and

I decided to raise our C flag and direct the fleet back to finish where they'd started rather than go to the leeward mark. So I gave Carol what I thought was a C flag, which also turned out to be a T flag; she raised it, and the leader of the pack, Tommy First, started whistling the Marseillaise because the red, white and blue T flag is the same as the French flag. Oh well, it was the Early Bird race...

While all this nonsense was going on, Steve Chalmers and Nina Hocker were cruising by the tail enders in Sea Breeze on a fresh breeze that hadn't reached the leaders yet. On the reach back to the finish David and Domingo overtook Tommy and Olivia to take the winner's horn in Tag Along. Tommy and Olivia posted second in Olivia, followed by newlyweds Alec and Jo Clowes in Due Diligence. Much to our surprise, Steve and Nina cruised across in fourth place having made out like bandits by starting so late and, I guess, having the Merry Little Breezes take pity on them. Sporting brand new sails, Hannah and Ben Garfield sailed Handoah across the line in fifth place flying their purple spinnaker.

The coming week will be a busy one at Quissett with the July Saturday series for Handicap, S Class and H Class starting tomorrow, a new members' party at the Harbor House Sunday, and all the Fourth of July festivities and races on Monday. At Quissett the Glorious Fourth kicks off with colors at the boatyard at 8:00 A.M., followed by the Quissett Parade marching from the Harbor House at 11:00 A.M. up Quissett Harbor Road to the four corners where Sippewissett Road and Quissett Avenue meet, around the Jacobsons' circular driveway and back down Quissett Harbor Road to the Harbor House for refreshments and the singing of patriotic songs on the Harbor House lawn to the music of the Quissett 4th of July Band. Trophy races for Handicap, S Class and H Class begin at 2:10 P.M., followed by the QYC annual meeting at 4:30, a social gathering, and then colors at the boatyard at 8:00. Enjoy!

#### **Early Bird Race**

**Herreshoff 12½ footers – June 27**

**RC: Janet Chalmers, Carol Suitor**

**Course I, shortened**

- 1. Tag Along, David Burt & Domingo Vasquez, 50:31**
- 2. Olivia, Tom First & Olivia First, 50:58**
- 3. Due Diligence, Alec Clowes & Jo Clowes, 52:39**
- 4. Sea Breeze, Steve Chalmers & Nina Hocker, 55:43**
- 5. Handoah, Hannah Garfield & Ben Garfield, 56:10**
- 6. Allie Rose, Chuck First & Tim and Lucas First, 56:47**
- 7. Swizzle, Ted Grayson & Erik Egelston, 57:48**
- 8. Penguin, Randy Evans & Steve Lee and Ann Catherine Lee 57:49**

**Cutline: Newlyweds Jo and Alec Clowes cross the Early Bird race finish line in their Herreshoff 12½ footer Due Diligence with big smiles. Photo by Janet Chalmers.**