

One-Design Sailing Symposium Part II, February 1, 2008, e-Rabble
by Bruce Nowak and John Washburn

In our January 2008 Rebel Rabble edition, John Washburn and I began our report of the fourth annual One-Design Symposium (ODSS) in Columbus, Ohio. In this report we summarized the main focus of the meeting which was 'connecting with the individual sailor' from industry's, US SAILING's and then the local sailing club or fleets' perspective. The common thread that ties these varied perspectives together is developing a complete and useful portrait of the individual sailor that we all are trying to connect with.

In response to our discussion in Part I, Jack Hern III was kind enough to send us some information from his dad's sales records circa 1969. In Robert A Brenner's annual general sales manager's letter to his Ray Greene sales force he too paints an eerily familiar portrait. "Here is a thumbnail sketch of compiled figures on the average boat buyer. He is probably between the age of 26 to 45 years old (62% are). Eighty per cent are married and average two children. His income would be approximately \$8700.00 and 28% of the buyers will earn less that \$7000.00. Better than 70% of the time the sailor will be a white collar worker. Funny thing, but in 50% of the cases if you take note he will be smoking a pipe." Go ahead, click on and open the January newsletter to page 22 and then compare the two pictures. Almost to the day, 38 years later are we still talking about the same group of people?

Whatever you might decide about the two portraits should make for a pretty good pub chat, but let us refocus on connecting. Or, how do we reach out to our communities to reinvigorate our clubs, fleets and/or national organizations? Making this connection is a continuous process of marketing, as Robert A. Brenner put it, "your dream". We are not in the business of selling a boat, a competition or a social club. We are, or should be, in the business of selling our collectively lived dream. And, the best part is that the collectively lived dream may be tailored to fit the uniqueness of individual desires!

To do that the 2007 ODSS broke the marketing tasks into numerous break-out sessions. Of those, John and I both attended the previously discussed "Add Women to Your Fleet" workshop and the "Making Your Class Attractive – Photos Enhance Class Marketing Efforts" which we will review in a bit. John choose "What RC's Need to Know to Run Your Regatta", "Selling and Fulfilling Sponsorships", "Coordinating Class Membership, Registration & Results" and "Sail Fast #6 – Preparing for the Big Event". Bruce choose "PR – Getting the Word Out", "Sail Fast #3 – One-Design Safety & Seamanship", "Nonprofit Organizations – 501(c)(3)" and "How High School Sailing Can Help Your One-Design Program Grow". Overall we missed out on 35% of the workshops available at this two-day event, while attending 100% of the general sessions.

Some of our choices were done to make sure that your National Rebel Class Association (NRCA) is using the best practices for regatta management. As the best John and I can figure it, your NRCA is on par or better in all areas. If there is anything we need to do it is to make sure our best practices are communicated to local regatta managers so that we consistently have an absolutely great regatta. The Safety & Seamanship workshop did

make a good point to this pond sailor about jurisdictional issues. Apparently emergencies can create turf wars, so it is best to have that predefined so that you are not caught in between the feuding parties. Not even the shadow knows why...

For a pair of wanna be photographers, the best of the show had to go to the “Make Your Class Attractive” workshop as Fred Elliot’s multi-media presentation was worth the trip all by itself. As the Snipe and Star class photographer, Fred had the photographs that visually demonstrated both the technical aspect and the emotional connection needed to enhance class marketing efforts. The amount of prose necessary to recount that show simply exceeds our collective talents, so we are just going to give it a go with a couple of photographs from our Rabble. From a technical aspect, all of our photographs work.



It is, however, that emotional connection that is difficult to communicate in a still photograph. In the above photograph, we try to help Uncle Al transmit the intense concentration these two junior competitors have in their race preparations by cropping. That intensity is increased by making sure that the second focal point is the right shoe on the dock in the second photograph. Looking back at the uncropped photograph, we think you would agree that your eye has a choice of either following the jib down to the bow, or the body to the dock.

The next Uncle Al shot that we have selected is uncropped on page 14 of the January Rabble. Compare that photograph to the one below that has actually been cropped and enhanced 3 times in order to improve the view ability of the facial expressions.



As I take a harder look at the picture, I may even want to crop more of the bow out so that the deck naturally leads you to the faces. As shown below, we get that lead but we



have had to sacrifice a bit of clarity in the picture. Take a close look at the North Sails emblem as well as the stitching in the jib and I think you will agree that they start getting fuzzier the more we crop. There are always trade-offs, but we are trying to create an emotional link to a dream that we want to share - so a little fuzziness is not that bad.

The last of Uncle Al's 2007 National Regatta shots has everything that Fred would want.



Well maybe a smile from the crew would help, but the movement of the boats, the feel of competition and warmth of the sun sing out to the viewer – do not dream join us now! Photographs act as a portal that shares the excitement on an interpretative level with all our potential members.

Of course there is nothing more interpretative than actually being in the boat for a good sail. One of the ways to get people in the boat is a strong learn to sail program and/or fun sail series that targets young folk. As one of Bruce's favorite exercises is trying to build a high school program, it seemed like a good fit to have him see what the Don Shea had to say about the Midwest Interscholastic Sailing Association (MISSA). What we found out is that MISSA is nothing like the summer sailing activity that Bruce puts together. Rather it is organized to further the sport of competitive sailing in both public and private high schools. All you have to do is go to <http://www.missa.net> and look at their 2007-

2008-2009 racing schedule to find out how ambitious these folks are. There is no doubt that if you have this kind of activity in your club that the over-all participation will increase. However, this type of program may not be a good fit with your location.

And that seems to be the crux of the matter. How each fleet or class or club reinvigorates itself while reaching out to the community is going to be defined by the culture and geo-social structures in that area. Clark Lake certainly is not an ideal place to sail in early March or late November (even though Brian Main and Bruce went out in November 2007 while it was blowing better than 20), but there still should be a way to build a lasting connection with the next generation of sailors. How can we encourage our newest fleet members to travel – knowing that they probably do not feel confident enough to go? Who really likes to be embarrassed while doing anything?

These are just some of the questions we all brought to our ODSS meeting. And even though we did not find the answer to them in a 2 + 2 fashion, we do have more tools in our sail bag. One of those tools is the creation of the learning environment discussed earlier. Another one of those tools is the community that makes up the ODSS and we are looking forward to the next meeting. Of course we are hoping the NRCA will follow the Interlake Sailing Class Association's lead by providing us stipends to travel to that meeting. That the next meeting maybe in San Diego's and at world famous Humphries has everything to do with it! Keep the sail side up.