

Gulf Atlantic Yacht Club History

Sam Trickey (with much input from David Bickford in 1996)

Revised as of Sept. 12, 2002

Motivated by the desire to cruise with friends rather than alone, the Gulf-Atlantic Yacht Club was formed in March 1976. The original officers were Paul Florence (Commodore; deceased), David Bickford (Vice Commodore), and Pat Tucker (now Habbaba; Secretary-Treasurer). Two of them still live in Gainesville but only one (Bickford) still owns sailboats. According to the Commodore's Message at the front of the 1978-79 Directory, the club began with 10 people who owned 9 boats sitting on the floor of the Free Spirit Nautical Shop. Several sailing clubs had come and gone in Gainesville. Around 1974 there was the Gainesville Sailing Association, a Thistle fleet, and a Hobie Cat fleet, all prior to the formation of GAYC.

In February 1976 Paul Florence issued an invitation memorandum announcing that an organizational meeting would be held on March 1, 1976 at 7:30 PM to discuss a planned cruise, decide on a name for the club, determine yearly dues, have sailors get acquainted, and plan future cruises and races. Paul and Jackie developed a list of "PERSONS INTERESTED IN A SAILING CLUB". To the best of memory, the original 10 were Paul and Jackie Florence, Pat (Tucker) and Saad Habbaba, Max and Alicia Sheppard, Jim and Carole Ropp, and Chuck and Jessie Cooper. The Free Spirit Nautical Shop was in the little building immediately north of the Volkswagen dealership (Northgate VW today) on the west side of NW 13th street. This enterprise was owned by Max and Alicia Sheppard. Max is a professor in the Coastal Engineering department at the University of Florida.

The 1978-79 Commodore, Charles "Chuck" Cooper went on to write "That was four years ago [apparently he miscounted] and now, after moving twice and showing more than 25 movies and 1,800 slides, we have 44 member families or more than 60 individuals who still have one thing in common...Sailing. We have sponsored more than 30 races and used 3 handicap systems. We have left our mark on 22 different docks, 3 expensive power boats, and 4 power lines." In those days the sailing focus, especially for the local racing, was Buddy's Landing, later known as Santa Fe Landing and Otter Cove. The line about 22 docks, 3 power boats, and 4 power lines is striking but only dimly remembered. Dave Bickford was able to shed light on two power-line incidents though. The first was at the end of the paved road that runs from beautiful downtown Earlton to the entrance at Buddy's Landing. There was a power line across the road. Sailors, being the polite people that they are and loved by power boaters, will try and pull up out of the way so other boaters will not be inconvenienced at the ramps while they unstep their masts. Chuck Cooper decided to pull up on the edge of the then unpaved road. He failed to notice the overhead wire and removed it with his mast. The power company wisely rerouted the wire and Chuck had to adjust the length of his shrouds due to the heat elongation on his Helsen 22.

The second power line removal by GAYC sailors occurred at Marineland and was by the Habbabas. After a GAYC St. Augustine to Marineland cruise, Saad and Pat's mast removed the overhead powerline during the retrieve. The power was not restored for six hours. You can imagine the concern of the Marineland staff at not having operational water pumps. The dockmaster was overheard expressing his fondness about sailors and sailboat masts.

Apparently there was controversy in the early going about name, burgee design, purpose or purposes, and how to spend the money. Resolution of these issues helped the club to survive. Early GAYC meetings often were heated affairs involving the conflicting interests of cruisers and racers. Eventually, the by-laws prevailed and so did the organization. The burgee design was the result of an open contest for designs, with the winning design submitted by Bill

Warinner, a member yet today. Our burgee flies in several yacht clubs in the United States, and in sailor bars in the Bahamas and Caribbean.

The balance and simplicity helped the club grow. The peak was 93 or 97 paid memberships. GAYC has survived in part by being flexible about regular meeting places. So far, in order they are: the Free Spirit Nautical Shop, University City Travel (W. University), North Florida Regional Hospital, Empire of America (NW 23 St.), the West University Burger King, and Napolatano's.

Activities helped too. The first club salt water cruise was Cedar Key to Crystal River on Labor Day, September 1976. The largest club cruise was 23 boats for the spring break week at Cayo Costa, Cabbage Key, and the Pine Island Sound - Sanibel Island - Captiva area.

In addition to the cruising and racing operations, in the early years there was an active day-sailing focus. Those events were primarily designed for small sailboats: Sunfish, Javelins, Snarks, Sunflowers, etc. There was a captain appointed for each one-day event organized at such locations as Wooten Park, Tavares, the park at Palatka (the day sail was south through Devel's Elbow and back), Lake Geneva, and Lake Santa Fe. Those events were complete: a picnic at the launch site, playgrounds for children, sudden rain showers, and ants all included.

Officers through the years as best as can be reconstructed were:

<u>YEAR</u>	<u>Commodore</u>	<u>Vice Commodore</u>	<u>Secretary</u>	<u>Treasurer</u>	<u>Sailbag Editor</u>
1976-77	Paul Florence	David Bickford	Pat Tucker	Pat Tucker	Bill Warinner
1977-78	Paul Florence	David Bickford	Pat Tucker	Pat Tucker	Bill Warinner
1978-79	Chuck Cooper	Max Sheppard	Bill Warinner	David Bickford	Bill Warinner
1979-80	Saad Habbaba	Dan Haile	Mardie Hankins	David Bickford	Fran Cruse
1980-81	Dan Haile	Roy Carriker	Bill Thibault	Dick Elnicki	Kay Haile
1981-82	Roy Carriker	Bill Thibault	Dick Elnicki	Doyle Webb	Kay Haile
1982-83	Red Scholefield	Warren Croke	Bob Hornberger	Gates Bryant	Warren Croke
1983-84	Warren Croke	Bob Estling	Bob Hornberger	Dennis Peterson	Warren Croke
1984-85	Bob Estling	Norm Leppla	Bob Hornberger	Dennis Peterson	Carol Carlisle
1985-86	Boomer Hough	Bob Hornberger	Mike Harris	Sue Wagner	Donna Lou Backen
1986-87	Paul Florence	No record	Sue Wagner	Alicia Sheppard	Sue Wagner
1987-88	Max Sheppard	Cindy Ropp	Janet Peterson	Alicia Sheppard	David Bickford
1988-89	David Bickford	Bob Hornburger	Fran Cruse	Mardie Hankin	Warren Croke
1989-90	Bob Hornburger	Susan Hodges	Fran Cruse	Mardie Hankin	David Bickford
1990-91	Vern Senterfitt	Susan Hodges	Nancy Sorkin	Joanne Stark	Howard Welch
1991-92	John Kjalberg	Wayne Wolfe	Nancy Sorkin (also Treas.)		Howard Welch
1992-93	John Kjalberg	Howard Welch	John Kjalberg (also Treas.)		Marilyn Simmons

1993-94	Howard Welch Simmons	Dale McComb	John Kjalberg (also Treas.)	Marilyn
1994-95	Howard Welch	--vacant--	John Kjalberg (also Treas.)	Louis & Wilma Galanos
1995-96	Howard Welch	Bill Rossly	Wilma Galanos	David Bickford Louis & Wilma Galanos
1996-97	Howard Welch	Chuck Broward	Wilma Galanos	David Bickford Lou Galanos
1997-98	Howard Welch	Susan Hodges	Wilma Galanos	David Bickford Lou Galanos
1998-99	same as 1997-98			
1999-00	Linda Ledbetter	Dan Rhine	Sam Trickey	Jib Davidson Teresa Davidson
In the Articles of Incorporation adopted March, 2000, a Program Director was created as well.				
2000-01	Linda Ledbetter	Dan Rhine	Sam Trickey	Jib Davidson Teresa Davidson
Larry Schnell, Program Director				
2001-02	Michelle Isaacson	Sam Trickey	Skip Adams	Jib Davidson Teresa Davidson
Larry Schnell Program Director				
2002-03, same as 2001-02				

For those of you scoring along with us at home (as baseball radio announcers once said), Pat Tucker is now Pat Habbaba and Fran Cruse is Fran McDonell.

In October, 1998, we resumed sponsorship of a regatta after a long interval (mid-1980s?) without doing so. Originally the "Lake Santa Fe Regatta", the low waters of Fall 2002 have forced a renaming to "Santa Fe Regatta" and an Oct. 2002 location at Crystal Cove, FL, on the St. Johns River.

It may be useful to conclude with a reminder about GAYC's original purpose. The original Bylaws opened with this statement. "Organization: The philosophy was and is to 'KEEP IT SIMPLE.'" The Dues section of those Bylaws reflects this focus. "Dues are collected to cover the publication, the membership meetings, the directory, and miscellaneous office expense (postage, etc.). All other 'operations' such as racing or cruises are by fundamental policy, self-supporting." The idea was to avoid controversies which sound like "why are you spending my dues money on *that*?" Our present Bylaws are similar.

It is also informative to go back to an early discussion of the purposes of the GAYC. Here is an interesting extract from the discussion of purpose that was printed in the June-July 1979 "Sailbag":

"Several sailing clubs have come and gone in Gainesville over the years. Some were established with prestigious goals..., others to advance one particular aspect of sailing.... Your GAYC started off with its prime purpose to promote safe sailing with heavy emphasis on cruising. Fortunately, the early officers, in trying to walk the tightrope among cruisers' interests, racers' interests, and day sailors developed a concept that hopefully would serve all these interests and avoid the pitfalls experienced by the other clubs. Along with the avoidance of these problems, they also addressed the usual pitfalls of organization...long

business meetings, financial squabbles..., cliques forming, ...too much organization, by-laws, Robert's' Rules of Order, and all the other well-intended mish-mash humans develop. Most of all the goal was to promote safe sailing and have FUN."