

the

# STARTING LINE

November 2011

SMALL YACHT SAILING CLUB OF OREGON



Photo by Dale Mack

# FROM THE COMMODORE

By Jim Sinclair, Commodore

**T**here are many reasons people volunteer their time and energy to an organization. Many say they want to "give back" for what they have received. Others want to bring about change, or gain a feeling of accomplishment from a job well done. Still others want to help out friends or make new friends, or gain new skills. The reasons are as varied as the people who volunteer. What are your reasons? Whatever they are, you can accomplish them by volunteering to help SYSCO remain the premier sailing community on the river. Maybe it's time to examine what you want from your sailing/racing experience and how you can help bring that about. If you are ready to "step it up a notch" give a call to any board member to discuss how you can help.



## Boat Show Opportunity and Free Admission

It's never too soon to be thinking about what you'll be doing in January. If you're not jetting off to a charter in the BVI or to lay in the sunshine in Mexico, you might want to consider manning the SYSCO booth for a couple hours at the Portland Boat Show. Once your booth duties are done you can check out all the shiny new toys and maybe even pick out your next boat.

The signup sheet on page 3 is current as of November 11. There are lots of choices left. Call or email Jim Sinclair to get your name on the list. 503.747.6611 or [sinclair5171@gmail.com](mailto:sinclair5171@gmail.com).

*Jim Sinclair*  
*Commodore*  
*S/V Dazzle*

## Coming Events

### SYSCO Annual Meeting

Monday, November 21

Dinner 6 pm — Meeting 7 pm

**NO SYSCO Meeting**

In December

**NO SYSCO Meeting**

In January

### Portland Boat Show

January 11-15

### SYSCO Fleet Night

Monday, January 23

### SYSCO Meeting

Monday, February 20

Dinner 6 pm — Meeting 7 pm

### Seattle Boat Show

January 27 — February 5

## Portland Boat Show Volunteers Needed

January 11-15

## 2012 Boat Show SYSCO Booth # 535

DATE	TIME	Volunteer 1	Volunteer 2
<b>Tues 1/10</b>	Setup – TBD **	Jim Sinclair	Bill Sanborn
<b>Wed 1/11</b>	10 am – 2 pm		
	2 pm – 5:30 pm	Gary Bruner	
	5:30 pm- 9:00 pm	Anna Campagna	Phil Campagna
<b>Thurs 1/12</b>	10 am – 2 pm		
	2 pm – 5:30 pm		
	5:30 pm- 9:00 pm		
<b>Fri 1/13</b>	10 am – 2 pm		
	2 pm – 5:30 pm		
	5:30 pm- 9:00 pm		
<b>Sat 1/14</b>	10 am – 2 pm	Rich Jones	
	2 pm – 5:30 pm	Tod Bassham	
	5:30 pm- 9:00 pm		
<b>Sun 1/15</b>	10 am – 1 pm		
	1 pm – 4 pm		
	4 pm—6 pm ** plus tear down	Jim Sinclair	Bill Sanborn

\*\* Note: Gary Whitney will assist with setup and tear down.

Congratulations

# Rock & Dena Kent

Winners of the 2011 SYSCO  
Commodore's Trophy



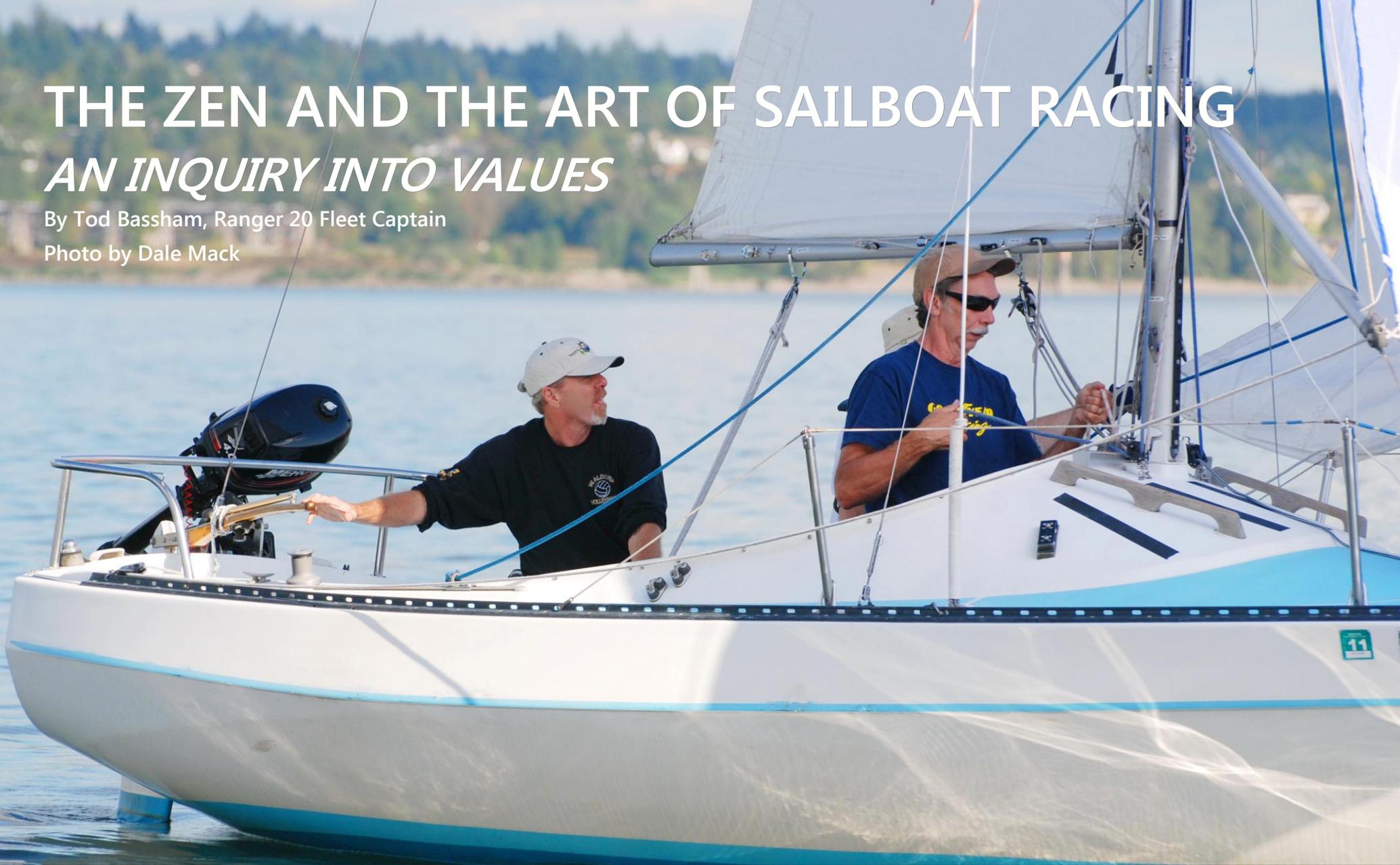
Photos by Dale Mack

# THE ZEN AND THE ART OF SAILBOAT RACING

## *AN INQUIRY INTO VALUES*

By Tod Bassham, Ranger 20 Fleet Captain

Photo by Dale Mack



**F**our long years Team Pumpkin Seed roamed the howling wilderness at the back of the Ranger 20 fleet, watching from afar as other boats executed perfectly timed starts, tacked effortlessly through shoals

of oncoming J-24s, and spun like dancers around the marks, to fly past us on their way back upriver, chutes exquisitely trimmed, bow waves streaming aft. We always enjoyed this leg of the race, waving merrily at the leaders

going by—or more precisely, at the entire fleet going by, since we inevitably brought up the rear. It gave us a rare opportunity to glimpse something other than the fleet transoms, disap-

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pearing once again into the distance.

Four seasons of relentless practice and sheer dumb persistence didn't seem to move our rankings much. Oh, we tried the usual fads: new sails, binge dieting, abstinence from conjugal relations (this phase didn't last long), slick bottom paint, hot pink bottom paint, hand-coating the bottom with fish entrails, etc. We tried it all, to little effect. By the start of the 2011 CYC summer series, our hopes and ambitions were diminished. Racing had become mostly a good excuse to drink beer afterward with our buddies at the docks (not that, mind you, drinking beer with buddies at the dock needs any particular excuse, despite what some of our conjugal partners might say).

But something odd happened the first race of the CYC summer series. We did our usual drift down to the starting line, crossed and looked downriver for the row of transoms to follow, but we saw only an empty Ranger-less expanse. Dumbfounded, we peered about, finally spotting the fleet behind us. The helm started to turn the boat around, to resume our usual place in the rear, but decided it didn't matter: we'd be sucking exhaust pretty soon, if history was any guide. So we just sailed on, expecting any moment to have one or more of the fleet leaders range up on either side, and offer us a tow with a wise-cracking grin. Incredibly, however, the greyhounds behind us were too busy dueling with each other to spot Pumpkin Seed



Photo by Dale Mack

hiding in plain sight. Without anyone to follow, we simply sailed the rhumb line, while everyone else went off hunting hot angles. Not until we rounded the leeward mark did the hares seem to notice the tortoise creeping toward the finish

line. A brisk chase could not prevent the unimaginable, and Pumpkin Seed cruised to her maiden bullet, after four years of haunting the bottom end of the rankings.

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Well, the beer and congratulations flowed at the docks that night, but we knew in our hearts that the win was a fluke, a whim of the capricious gods. Quite a good joke, too, but soon the moral order of the universe would surely reassert itself. Only it didn't.

The second race was Gorge air, 15 knots gusts to 20. Again we found ourselves in a waking dream, leading the pack. This time the leaders would have none of it and, declaring a truce among themselves, jointly attacked us from behind on the spinnaker run. We held them off with a series of wild roundups, brilliant tactical moves which would have been more impressive if they hadn't been caused by our helm curling up into a fetal ball in sheer terror at every gust. The biggest gust of all came through, just as we pulled down our chute at the leeward pin. Behind us, Flying Frog capsized and stayed down, causing most of the fleet to abandon the race to help. At the docks, in a bibulous flush, the fleet voted to toss the second race, so as not to penalize the heroes who stopped to aid distressed mariners. But in the crapulous dawn of the next day the realization hit us: Pumpkin Seed was still, technically, leading the series, with only four more races to go. We'd sailed inexplicably well so far, but we knew that whom the gods wish to destroy, they first raise up.

For the third race, the self-imposed pressure was intense. For the first time in our racing ca-

reer, preventing screw-ups was critical. We decided on a risky start strategy: sailing down early to the line, backing the sails, and making loud "beep-beep" noises like a truck in reverse. The idea was to confuse everyone into just conceding the race to us. Oddly, this tactic did not have the desired effect. The fleet yelled at us and sailed on by. Still, we managed a decent start in the front third of the pack. Bobbing and weaving, we frantically worked our way into the lead, hitting the starboard layline to the mark a little low. Tack early or try to shoot the mark? Again we chose the risky option, a complex and

ultimately unsatisfying maneuver that required luffing, backwinding the jib, falling off on port tack, fouling six boats, drifting helplessly into the mark, and going from the lead to last place in about 10 seconds.

At the dockside post-mortem a dejected Team Pumpkin Seed decided we needed a new strategy. Our first race had been a care-free romp; our third race a stress-ridden nightmare. In winning that first race, we had lost something essential, some innocence that had protected us from disappointment. One of the crew



Photo by Dale Mack

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drained their beer, belched loudly, and pulled out a well-thumbed copy of the proofs for *Sailing and Philosophy*.<sup>1</sup> We flipped the pages looking for inspiration, some ancient wisdom to bring our mojo back. For hours, or as long as the beer lasted, we argued over whether stoicism, neoplatonic idealism, dialectical materialism or bobmarleyism offered the philosophic consolation we craved. After a few fistfights, we had worked through the list and finally settled on an esoteric blend of Zen and Tibetan Buddhism.

The next day we downloaded the course materials from the Floating Lotus Monastery and School of Maritime Meditation, in Kyoto, Japan, and set to work. By the following week we had earned our dharma badges, second class, had epoxied to the bow a statute of the laughing Buddha, and had set out to follow the eight-fold path to enlightenment and nirvana—and, we hoped, a crushing victory over the fleet.

The rest of the story requires a shift to the present tense. Before the start of the fourth race, we heave to and sit zazen on our boat cushions. We close our eyes, and together contemplate the emptiness of existence, the impermanence of all things, and the knowledge that striving leads only to suffering and loss. The warning horn rings like a bell, with a pure tone that clears the mind. We smile, light the incense

<sup>1</sup> A actual book, to be published in 2012 by Wiley-Blackwell (Patrick A Goold, editor).



Photo by Dale Mack

sticks and with our prayer flags flapping turn to do battle. But the battle, we soon realize, is with ourselves or, more precisely, with the delusion that we possess "selves." The only thing that seems real in that moment is the boat and the flow of wind over the sails and the water over the keel. The helm lets go of the tiller and laughs at the absurdity of striving to cross an imaginary line on a moving current of water at a precise instant in the surge of time. The other

boats scatter out of our way, surmising correctly from our erratic course, and the giggles and incense smoke rising from our decks, that we are Not Really Under Command.

Somehow we wind up near the green buoy just as the little horn sounds, a beautiful sound like a gong in a temple. The other Rangers are sailing up behind us, and we turn to play with them, calling out "Starboard, Port, is there a difference?" After a while a little yellow buoy

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appears, and we go around it to see what is on the other side. Nothing there! For some reason this is tremendously funny. Then the other boats behind us put up very large, pretty sails, so we put up ours, too, just to be friendly. The boat seems to know what to do, and our pretty sail pulls us effortlessly upriver. We sit again in a circle to chant the Diamond Sutra and tell each other koans, like "what is the sound of one hand trimming?"

After a timeless interlude we find another little yellow buoy in our way. Like the first yellow buoy, it is surrounded by emptiness, and yet is connected to a web of karmic patterns, forming what we recognize in our enlightened state as a "race course." We are part of that web, and obedient to our karma we turn around to go tell the first yellow buoy that it is not alone in the universe. Down floats our pretty sail, up floats the genoa, and we fly downriver, passing between an anchored boat flying prayer flags and yet another buoy, this one orange in color, like a monk's robe. There is that little horn again, what does it mean? After visiting the first little yellow buoy with the good news, we sail home in the twilight, enjoying the first twinkling of stars. At the docks, there are many friendly sailors, who shake our hands and hand us cold bottles of a bitter drink. Bowing gratefully, we offer them in return warm cups of sweet yak butter tea.

The next week pretty much the same thing



Photo by Dale Mack

happens, and again the following week. Free of striving and the desire to win, free of the delusion of self, our sailing has become effortless and a matter of profound joy. After a while the other Rangers tell us that we have "won" the CYC summer series in our class, a deeply silly notion. Apparently we will receive some kind of

plastic statuette to mark "our" victory. This absurdity makes us smile, but we plan to go to the party anyway, to celebrate our friendship with so many fine sailors, and to toast them with raised bottles of fermented yak butter. Namasté and fair winds, y'all.



# Crew

*Photo by Dale Mack*

# SYSCO

## Annual Meeting

November 21



# Election of Officers for 2012

Followed by a fascinating presentation by

Navigation Guru

## Mark Anderson

History of Navigation

Elmer's Restaurant — Delta Park  
9848 North Whitaker Road  
Portland, OR 97217

Dinner — 6 pm  
Meeting — 7 pm



# *Dry Feet*

*Photo by Dale Mack*



# *River Rose*

*Photo by Dale Mack*

# SYSCO BOARD MEETING MINUTES

By Gary Bruner, Secretary

**T**he November meeting of the SYSCO Board of Directors was held Monday, November 7 at Delta Park Elmer's. Present were: Jim Sinclair, Tod Bassham, Rich Jones, Michael Nance, Jan Burkhart, Bill Sanborn, Edie Felix, Karen Anderson, Phil and Anna Campagna, Jim Shaw and Gary Bruner. Several members dropped in to pick up their swag from the awards banquet or to pay membership fees, but none of them stayed for the meeting. Commodore Jim Sinclair 'turned the crank' at 7 pm sharp with a general welcome.

## Reports

**Treasurer:** Treasurer Tod Bassham presented a detailed financial report to the board. Summarizing, Tod reported that we are at 99% of projected income for the year, in spite of the fact that we were quite short of projections for the Awards Banquet, with fewer attendees than expected. SYSCO is currently at 81% of projected total expenditures, though the Boat Show remains, as does reconciling a rather large bill from PYC from whom we rented the facility for the Banquet.

**Membership:** Jan Burkhart reported that we have two new memberships: Lexi Z & Alan Rubins have joined. They own a SJ 24 named Caution. Rolando and Amber Santiago are the

other new members with a Newport 27 they call Sea Fever. Their memberships were approved by the board. It was decided that any new memberships yet this year would apply to 2012. And it was agreed that, while membership and renewals would be online, we would continue to accept paper/snail mail memberships this season while people adjust to the new method. It was also discussed that we should clarify the volunteer choices mentioned in the membership handbook, and expand them to include most board positions, in order to encourage more participation from the membership. Likewise, it was agreed that a short description of each position might prove helpful to let members know more of what might be involved in volunteering for a particular task. Gary Bruner is initiating that upgrade.

**Racing:** Race Committee Chair Michael Nance had a long report.

Race Entries Going Online. First, we discussed and approved the motion that race entries will be accepted either online with the new Regatta Network software, or by snail mail and check.

SYSCO Won't Accept Late Entries in 2012. It was agreed that, from now on, all entries, whether online or by mail must be received by the Race Committee Chair no later than 48

hours before the start of the first race, in order to give time for fleet breakdowns, and communication with racers. No longer will we accept late entries, so the idea of 'late fees' is moot. Entries should be sent to the SYSCO mail box which will need to be checked by the RC, or sent directly to the address of the Race Committee Chair once he or she has been selected.

SYSCO Database. There was more discussion about the actual database and what would be possible with Regatta Network as well as potential difficulties with the transition from the current database that has been run by Edie Felix.

US Sailing Rebate. Bill Sanborn confirmed the wording in the race book that US Sailing members who register and pay for races who are not SYSCO members may ask for a \$2 rebate at any SYSCO board or general meeting.

Fleet Night in January. The Second Annual FLEET NIGHT will be held on Monday, January 23rd at a location yet to be announced. PYC is quite expensive, but Karen Anderson said she would check with PYC to check rates. Gary Bruner volunteered to check with Willamette Yacht Club about rates and capacity of their facility at Tomahawk Bay. Rose City Yacht Club

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is great, but small enough that we had to turn away people who wanted to attend last year, and we hope to avoid that. There was discussion about providing pizza and beer again this year, as well as putting out a donation jar to help defray expenses, but no action was taken.

OCSA Racebook. It was agreed that SYSCO would purchase twenty OCSA racebooks to sell to racers at Fleet Night.

Michael submitted some revised wording of the SYSCO Notice of Race for the Spring Series which will need further revision after discussion of deadlines and the deletion of late entries or fees.

Michael announced that after survey input, he is moving up the SYSCO series one week, eliminating the break between Spring and Summer Series. Instead, we'll take a 1 week hiatus the week of July 4.

OCSA. Mike also gave a report on the OCSA meetings he's been involved in. OCSA has requested four SYSCO volunteers to help with setup and cleanup for the OCSA Tropical Night Awards party on Nov. 12. Jan Burkhart, Tod Bassham and Gary Bruner volunteered to help.

Michael mentioned that OCSA has some money to help various clubs and they need to know how to spend it, for marks, or even, possibly course boards. Anna Campagna said she

would contact OCSA with information she's gathered previously in pursuing this.

OSCA also expects a basket from SYSCO for a raffle prize. Karen Anderson will take care of this and will include a one year membership to SYSCO.

**Pancho III:** Phil Campagna reported that Bill Brennan is busy now, but he will see to it that Pancho's hull and railing damage will be repaired by Bill over the winter. Phil will also make sure that an external speaker is installed on Pancho before next season to help with communication and will purchase three lifejackets for the boat; the funds were approved earlier in the year.

**Program:** In Randall Poff's absence, Tod confirmed that the speaker for the November 21 general meeting will feature speaker Mark Anderson who will speak on the history of navigation, with many 'props' on display to augment his talk. This will occur after the nomination/election of 2012 officers occurs. Jim Sinclair reminded everyone that the next board meeting will be on December 5 at Elmer's, but that there will be no general membership meeting that month. The next general meeting will be Fleet Night on January 23rd.

### Old Business

Jim reminded everyone that just two opportunities remain for unclaimed prizes from 2011 racing to be picked up. One is at the OCSA Tropi-

cal Night on Nov. 12 (see Mike Stainsby) or the general membership meeting on November 21. After that???

### New Business:

Portland Boat Show. The Portland Boat Show will be held from January 11 to 15. Jim handed out a sheet and got several volunteer commitments from those in attendance, but much more help will be needed. Michael has several ideas to improve SYSCO's presence at the Boat Show, but discussion and action was put off until the December Board meeting.

Replacing the SYSCO Spring Regatta. Phil Campagna made a logical argument to change the racing schedule from past practices. Since the SYSCO Spring Regatta has normally been held the week after the Opening Day Regatta in relatively cold weather and 'iffy' wind, Phil suggested we move that regatta to an empty weekend in June. It was moved, seconded and approved to call the new regatta the SYSCO SUMMER SOLSTICE REGATTA and hold it on Friday, June 22nd in lieu of our assigned Beer Can Race and continue racing on Saturday, June 23rd after 2 PM.

SYSCO Still Seeking to Fill Positions. Finally, it was noted that SYSCO is in serious need of a number of positions to be filled for next year. At this point in time, the Vice Commodore/Race Committee Chair position is open. Tod Bassham was thinking of it, but is simply too

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busy. Members are willing to help anyone who steps up officially.

Next year's Commodore is Michael Nance and Rear Commodore will be Jim Sinclair. The Treasurer position is filled by Tod Bassham, but the Secretary position is open.

Jan Burhart will continue as the Membership Chair, Gary Bruner will head up a Pancho Maintenance Committee made up of volunteers, and Anna has some ideas for our Entertainment/Event Chair.

Open positions needing volunteers to step up include: Race Committee Chair, Secretary,



**Christmas  
Ships**

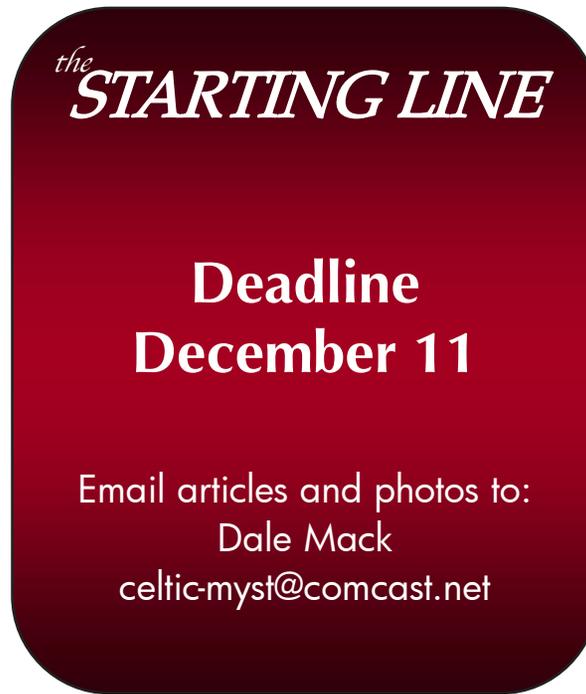
**December 8-20**

**christmasqships.org**

Newsletter Editor.

Race Committee VHF Use in 2012. Karen Anderson asked a question about a new VHF requirement she'd heard about, but Gary Bruner reported that the new wording from OCSA will simply state that a radio transmission from a Race Committee may augment or clarify information to racers over VHF Channel 72 as a courtesy (like horns). This might occur in cases of poor vision of flags, unusual sequences of starts, over early boats, or other out of the ordinary situations. Failure to listen to transmissions or for the RC to fail to send a message will not be grounds for redress. The flag signals will continue to rule the race course.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:50 pm.



*the* **STARTING LINE**

**Deadline  
December 11**

Email articles and photos to:  
Dale Mack  
celtic-myst@comcast.net

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P.O. Box 5502  
Portland, Oregon 97228  
www.sailpdx.com/sysco.html

**OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE CHAIRS**

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Vice Commodore	Michael Nance	360.901.3991
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Membership	Jan Burkhart	503.701.5706
Newsletter Editor	Dale Mack	360.260.4196
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Mark Boat Maintenance	Phil Campagna	503.735.0982
Awards Banquet	Anna Campagna	503.789.0586
Historians	Bill & Vicki Sanborn	503.286.9257
OCSA Representative	Phil Campagna	503.735.0982



# Pursuit

*Photo by Dale Mack*



# *Teamwork*

*Photo by Dale Mack*