A guide to the Yacht Racing Association records, 1947-1962

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Abstract: The Yacht Racing Association records, 1947-1962 (SAFR 4859, HDC 646), is comprised mainly of newsletters, announcements and scrapbooks from San Francisco Bay area yacht clubs. Don Seaton, the Recorder for the Yacht Racing Association was the compiler. The collection is processed to the item and/or file unit level and is open for use without restrictions.
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This collection was transferred from the Golden Gate National Recreation Area museum collection to the San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park museum collection.
Historical or Biographical Note
In 1935, The Yacht Racing Association (YRA) was formed as an association of yacht clubs. In 1937, the Sun, Moon and Snipe dinghy fleets formed an association that was formalized in 1938 as the Small Boat Racing Association (SBRA). It provided racing for small one design dinghy and keelboat fleets on the protected waters of the Bay and the lakes of Northern California. The YRA and the SBRA provided programs of racing that satisfied the yachting community for the next twenty years.
Then, in 1957, the International 110, Clipper, Mercury and Zephyr fleets, having tired of the SBRA traveling to so many distant lakes, organized seven races on the Bay. In 1958, this group formally organized itself as an association of yacht clubs calling itself the Small Yacht Racing Association (SYRA). The SYRA grew rapidly during its first few years and then stabilized throughout the 1960s with entries ranging between 130 and 160.
In the 1960s, growing pains were caused by prosperity and fiberglass and created problems between the three associations. Even though the associations were comprised of the same yacht clubs, there was no method of coordinating the increasing demands for the same dates, places and sponsors for races.

In 1966, the first major effort to solve the problem of rapid growth and the changing mood of the competitors was the formation of the Chartered Associations of the YRA. These groups were formed to represent the respective demands of one design, handicap and measurement racing rules. However, the YRA By-Laws and Standing Rules reinforced isolation from the other associations and prevented rapid response to changing needs. As the larger and senior association, the YRA exerted the most influence over the control of yachting activities and policies.

In the early 1970s, conflict between the associations increased as they were operating in isolation from one another and other craft were competing for the water.

In 1975, a small group of individuals accomplished is now taken for granted. Accomplishments included the creation of one set of yacht club sailing instructions on waterproof paper, the establishment of definitive courses, an increase in the number of sponsoring clubs, the making of an inclusive Master Racing Calendar scheduling process, a merger of all offshore activities into the Offshore Yacht Racing Association, the arrangement of a signaling course system, a commitment to promptly mailing race results, increasing responsiveness to membership, formation of the Race Management Committee and the realization of sound financial status. Final steps in the unification process were revising the By-Laws and Standing Rules.

The new YRA became an association of individuals, represented through their clubs by Delegates. These Delegates plus Charter Association Directors, elected the Board of Directors.

Today, the primary role of the Yacht Racing Association (YRA) of San Francisco Bay is to organize and support competitive racing in Northern California. It promotes, coordinates and administers organized racing and functions as sponsor of nearly 30 races a year. The YRA ensures races happen in a fair, safe, fun and competitive way for racers at all levels. It records, coordinates and schedules over 800 individual races on the San Francisco Bay.

In addition to race management, the YRA maintains buoys, addresses appeals through a committee, processes Performance Handicap Racing Fleet (PHRF) Certificates and acts as the liaison for the United States Coast Guard and local government organizations.

The YRA is a membership organization for individual sailors and businesses that serve and support the sailing community. The YRA acts as an advocate for sailing in the Bay and is responsive to the racing needs and desires of its members. It can organize lobbying efforts as necessary in the interest of all racing sailors. Members can also belong to one of four different charter associations each of which represents a specific type of racing or types of boats: Handicap Divisions Association (HDA), the One Design Class Association (ODCA), the Offshore Yacht Racing Association (OYRA) and the Wooden Boat Racing Association (WBRA).

Collection Scope and Content
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The scrapbooks contains newspaper clippings, periodical articles, ephemeral items and photographs. Most of the newsletters are from the Corinthian Yacht Club, the Elkhorn Yacht Club, the Golden Gate Yacht Club, the Saint Francis Yacht Club and the San Francisco Yacht Club.

Collection Arrangement
The 54 legal size file folders are arranged alphabetically by file title and the 14 scrapbooks are arranged chronologically in flat oversize boxes.

Subjects and Indexing Terms
Yacht clubs
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Yacht racing--records
Yachting
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