

# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

## Delegates

M Over the years I have attended my share of meetings in this organization. I've been in discussions with a number of people who are much senior to me in both time served and expertise demonstrated. I have listened many times to opinions about how the GSBYRA is faring in our modern times compared to years past. "Why is our turnout generally down?", "How do we keep sailors involved as they grow into adulthood?", "Why are fewer clubs active?", "How do we increase participation in our championships and ladder events?"...

I could go on, but we are familiar with these questions and more like them. Our challenge is to come up with answers for each of these which will work! There's the tough nut to crack. Everyone seems to have an opinion based on his or her own experience, and there seems to be little consensus out there. Like everyone I share these topics with, I have my own opinion, or at least I did. But now I'm not so sure. Having served this past year as President, I'm starting to change my point of view.

I used to think the main problem with GSBYRA was the shortage of volunteers. We do see many of the same faces at most of our functions, and most of the business gets done by a very few dedicated individuals. However, I no longer believe that to be our biggest problem; rather it is the result of our biggest problem.

One of my goals when I stepped into this office was to improve communications within the organization. That goal has proved to be elusive. There are just so many Club Officers I can speak to. There are limited opportunities to address Club Boards, and almost no chances to address their memberships.

GSBYRA is composed of a truly varied group of members. From the dedicated sailors of the South Bay Cruising Club, to the summer folks at Saltaire and Point O' Woods, to the motor yachtsmen of clubs like Long Island Yacht Club, to those who feel

they are too distant to really compete with the rest, we are a loose confederation of clubs which don't always see themselves as having much in common with the other member clubs. Certainly, we continue to enjoy some participation by a majority of our member clubs, but there are a few who really aren't at all active. I actually had an adult sailor from a member club ask me in 2006 what exactly the GSBYRA is!

I am writing this knowing the people I really want to read it probably even won't receive this book. What a "Catch 22!" To all of you who are reading it, the GSBYRA needs you to act on its behalf. We need each of you who care about sailing on our waters to become activists. Find out who your club representative to the GSBYRA is, and help that person to educate your membership about the GSBYRA. Promote GSBYRA to your boards. Does your Club Delegate even have a say at the Board level? When is the last time your club hosted an informational meeting including a presentation by your delegate about what's happening in the GSBYRA?

So here, I believe, is the real dilemma we face as an organization: Not one officer or committee chair is as important to the survival of GSBYRA as are its Club Delegates. Through whatever means, be it newsletter, website, meetings, social gatherings, or even scheduled dedicated events, we need our sixteen Club Delegates and those of you who care about the sport of sailing to spread the message about GSBYRA's purpose to your members, many of whom don't know what we are about.

Start by seeing that each of your members receives a copy of this yearbook.

How does it feel to be so important to the survival of organized competitive sailing on the South Shore? You really are.

Gerard Holwell