

## STOWE YACHT CLUB & THE SOLING ONE METER

How it all started.....

Early in the summer of 1986, a couple showed up at a little pond in Waitsfield, VT with these small (under 20 inches) RC sailboats called Heron 12's. A few of us, with big boat experience, were fascinated and bought boats for ourselves and we started racing on a regular schedule.

Later on, in September, we got a call from Bruce Nourjian inviting us to participate in an all-RC boat event at the pond at Commodore's Inn in Stowe, VT. We showed up with about six of these little boats. There were several much larger RC sailboats. I remember at least one Santa Barbara, a steam tug, some other powerboats and even an RC rowboat. Anyway, our group held a mini regatta and afterward handed our transmitters to the Stowe folks for them to experience RC sailing. Well, they were just as fascinated as we were and went right out and bought some Heron 12's for themselves.

Since Stowe had a much better venue than we had, we started sailing with them on a regular basis. I don't remember if we sailed much more that fall, but we certainly were at it hot and heavy the next summer (1987).

I had known about the AMYA, joined in the summer of 1987, and ordered a bunch of back issues of Model Yachting. Researching these back and current issues became important later on.

At the end of the 1987 sailing season, we (the Stowe Yacht Club) had a lot of discussions about how the Heron 12 was small and hard to see; it was difficult to handle in heavy air; and, there were a number of other misgivings as to whether we should continue with these boats.

That fall, I remembered an article I had seen somewhere about the Soling One Meter, and as luck would have it, I ran across an ad by Victor Model Products and ordered one and started building. I brought the partially-built boat to our annual winter meeting as a "Show and Tell" for the members of the club and they recognized the advantages right away. Inexpensive and relatively easy to build and transport. I think members ordered six and started a group building project at Joe Mueller's house.

By the summer of 1988, we had a fleet and we were sailing twice a week at the Commodores Pond in Stowe. There were always quite a few people having afternoon cocktails on the deck, and little by little some more people wanted to buy a boat and get in on the action. Some of these folks had big boat experience and they started to mess around with rigging changes and sail material. We discussed this and decided that the boats should be built to Victor's specs and remain that way. That way, an experienced skipper could sail a novice's boat to the front of the fleet and show that it wasn't the boat but the skipper who won races. This is true of one design sailing. To this end, I wrote up

a short list of specs that augmented Victor's plans and helped assure the one design premise for the Soling One Meter.

By now, I had read all the Model Yachting magazines and had a list of all AMYA sanctioned clubs. Every time I saw a reference to some club sailing these boats I would send a copy of our specs with a cover letter saying that this is what we were doing and if they would agree to something similar, we wouldn't have to muck around much with our boats if the Soling ever became an AMYA-sanctioned class.

Sometime in 1989, I either met or got a call from Jack Gregory in Needham, MA. He explained that his club, the Minuteman Model Yacht Club, was looking for a boat that would stimulate their membership, which was slowly fading away, and would stimulate an interest for potential new members. He saw the potential for these boats but was concerned that they were not an AMYA-sanctioned class. After lots of letters, phone conversations and occasional meetings, Jack took on the project of rewriting and improving our specs to the point where they would be in line with an AMYA-sanctioned class. I also sent Jack my database of all the clubs that I had been in contact with so that they would be included in the formation of the new class rules.

We already knew in October of 1989 that Victor Model Products had sold over 2,000 of these boats, and a lot of those to AMYA members. We were sure we had more than the twenty minimum required by the AMYA!

In late February of 1990, we and several other clubs received a copy of the proposed set of specifications that were about to be presented to the AMYA in an effort to have our boats be certified as an AMYA class. We were asked for our comments and wanted a prompt response. We quickly surveyed our members and got off a letter with our recommendations. I assume other interested clubs did the same. The rest is history. Between then and now, the Soling One Meter built by Victor Model Products is the largest class in the AMYA. I had the idea, but Jack Gregory's hard work got it done.

A quick aside: My wife, Barbara, still has Soling One Meter number One.....

Curt Wright  
For Stowe Yacht Club