



BRANT BEACH YACHT CLUB

THE STORY OF A YACHT CLUB

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AN INFORMAL HISTORY OF THE
BRANT BEACH YACHT CLUB
BRANT BEACH, NJ

TEXT BY RICHARD POWELL

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Probably the cove where the Brant Beach Yacht Club makes its home has been known and used by water-faring people ever since the first boats explored the lower reaches of Barnegat Bay.

There are many other coves along the eighteen-mile bay shore of New Jersey's Long Beach Island, of course, but the Brant Beach cove is a perfect harbor. Nature does not make such coves often. It creates them as slowly and seldom as it makes a fine pearl. First a harbor shaped like a half-moon has to be scooped out of the land, leaving points that jut into the open water to protect the cove from strong currents and storm winds. Then an off-shore island is needed as shelter from squalls that may churn across the outer bay. There should be deep water leading inshore, and a gentle shoaling into a beach of sand. Finally - and most difficult of all - nature has to do a skillful job of engineering, and make sure that the cove is exactly curved and proportioned to let the tide clean it properly twice a day.

If the engineering is not done well, the cove will either be chewed away by wind and current, or else will turn into a stagnant backwater and in the end become a marsh.

It was such a cove that nature made at Brant Beach. To the north, a point of land shelters the cove from northeasters that from time to time howl down the length of Long Beach Island. A southerly point of land, and Long Beach Island itself, protect cove from the south and southwest winds that prevail in summer. Offshore a few hundred yards lies High Island, guarding the harbor from summer

squalls that roll across from the mainland. And the cove is so engineered that, twice a day, the tidal flow can do its housecleaning job neatly and well.

So, no doubt many centuries ago, the cove was made. As far back as local maps exist, it was there, looking just as it does today, fixed in shape by an exact balance of natural forces. The sedge grass grew out along its protecting points and held them in place, even against the burrowing of the small fiddler crabs. Clams dug into the bottom, and mussels clung to the banks in dark purple bunches. In the ten-acre pool of water enclosed by the points of land, schools of killies and spearing sought shelter, and weakfish raided among them.

Big blue-clawed crabs lurked in the deeper holes, and in the shallows little crabs prospected warily for food. Brant and mallard, gull and tern, shearwater and sandpiper wheeled and darted and dove, just as they do today.

First to come to the cove were undoubtedly the bayshore Indians, who had their village on pilings near the mouth of Tuckerton Creek, across the bay. They came to hunt and fish and to collect shells from the ocean beaches to use for ornaments and for making wampum. The cove would have attracted them as a safe place to beach their dugout canoes, as a good spot for a temporary camp, and because it was less than two hundred yards across the island to the dunes that held back the ocean. Next came the warriors of the Unami or Turtle Clan of the Lenni Lenape, who slaughtered the native Tuckerton tribe and took over the Barnegat Bay area. Then came the white man.

It would be pleasant to be able to claim that Sebastian Cabot saw the cove when he sailed the coast in 1498, or that Henry Hudson looked at it in 1609 when the log of his "Half Moon" reported that the present Ocean County shoreline was "a very good land to fall in with, and a pleasant land to see." But of course the ships of Cabot and Hudson stayed clear of the tricky inlets of Barnegat Bay. The Dutch ventured into the inlets in 1614. To the south they found many small islands filled with nesting terns, and called the inlet Eyren Haven or Harbor of Eggs - a name that evolved into Little Egg Harbor. To the north they gave the respectful name of Barendegat or Breakers Inlet to what is now Barnegat Inlet. But they left the wide reaches of the bay unexplored.

Nobody knows how much the cove may have been used in the early days of the white man. The earliest settlers on Long Beach Island were English whalers in 1690, who set up a fifteen-foot watch pole on the beach in the Surf City area. Scandinavian fishermen settled at Barnegat Inlet. Over on the mainland Tuckerton developed into a busy little shipping center, and during the Revolution sent privateers out through Little Egg Inlet to harry British shipping. Perhaps the Tuckerton patriots, from time to time, landed at the Brant Beach cove and sent a scouting party across the dunes to spy on ocean shipping lanes. It does no harm to wonder if the cove, so conveniently located about midway on Long Beach Island, may not have attracted cautious little groups of men who needed a central spot from which both bay and ocean could be watched. Certainly there were pirate landings on the island, and there is a legend of a chest being dug up hastily at night by strangers, who vanished at dawn leaving behind a broken cutlass. Old Spanish coins have been found on the beaches, and only a cynic would say they

might have come from an ordinary shipwreck rather than from a pirate hoard. It is much more fun to imagine that, somewhere in the arc of the Brant Beach cove, a few feet of sand lie atop a rotting brass-bound chest, and that in some future year it will be unearthed not by a pirate's spade but by the small tin shovel of a child.

It is likely that the perfect little cove drew visitors during the Nineteenth Century. There would have been mainlanders coming once a year to round up some of the half-wild cattle that were allowed to roam the island, There were baymen who would have wanted to gather the windrows of seaweed drying on the shore, and to bale it for market. Now and then a fisherman came ashore to build a shack, or to moor a houseboat where it was safe from wind and water. But most of the time the cove lay quiet and empty, as it had for centuries, waiting for people to come and make full use of it.



The people began coming as the first decade of the Twentieth Century drew near its close. A group led by Henry B. McLaughlin, Philadelphia lawyer, saw a future for the two-mile strip of sand and marsh, dune and meadow that was to be called Brant Beach. It took a bit of seeing, because the only transportation to Long Beach Island, other than boats, was by a single-track railroad that tiptoed over the bay on pilings. There was no auto bridge, and even if there had been one, the road down the spine of the island was little more than a set of ruts in

sand. Besides, in the first decade of the Twentieth Century, people did not leap into their cars and drive to the shore unless they knew how to handle pot-holed gravel roads, could repair a car, were expert at changing tires and mending inner tubes, and had six or seven hours to spare.

The McLaughlin group bought the land of Brant Beach, built a railroad station and coaxed the train to stop there on its way to and from Beach Haven. The group advertised its development in Philadelphia papers, and now and then ran free train excursions from Philadelphia with the promise of a clambake and corn roast in Brant Beach. The train excursions were well attended but not many people bought lots, although you could have picked up a choice lot for fifty to a hundred dollars with the neighboring one thrown in free.

The families who began to settle Brant Beach came by ones or twos each summer in those early years. Usually they had heard about it from their friends, and tested it out by a visit before getting a couple of lots and commissioning William Shinn, a carpenter-builder who had settled in Brant Beach, to put up one of his sturdy shingled cottages. In 1914 the auto bridge linked the mainland with the island, and the island road was graveled for cars, and a little spurt of building began. By 1916 there were perhaps a dozen and a half cottages in Brant Beach, ranging from what is now 59th street on the north to the present 65th street on the south.

Not that anybody needed street numbers in such a small community. It was a tightly-knit group: McLaughlin and Fritz, Haines and Eckert, Powell and Hogg

and Gross and Jones and Campbell and Dunwoodie and Jardin and a few others. All were middle or upper-middle-class people from Philadelphia or neighboring towns in New Jersey, and they had many things in common. In particular, they liked sand and dunes and ocean and bay, and bright lights to them meant the sun and moon and stars.

They had a fairly rigid moral code. A man named Tinsman built an expensive house on the dunes at the ocean end of Kimberly avenue (59th street). A northeaster chopped away what remained of the dune and wrecked his house, and that was a judgment on him for building such a showy place and tempting fate by putting it so near the ocean. A New Yorker named Kline built an expensive place on the bay at the foot of Paulding avenue. He was reported (almost in shocked whispers) to be a stock broker, and he was also reported (definitely in shocked whispers) to throw empty whisky bottles in the bay after parties for his New York friends. Unlike the ocean and the Tinsman place, the bay treated the Kline place gently, but the community of Brant Beach was not as kind.

It was a quiet life in Brant Beach. You could go to the beach and build sand castles and collect driftwood (needed for the open fireplaces and the wood-burning stoves) and sun yourself and swim. You could meet the morning train at eleven o'clock and pick up your milk, hoping that it hadn't gone sour, and go to the post office and wait for the Dannehowers or later the Pettibones to sort the mail. On Friday at six p.m. you could go to the train station to meet the men coming down after a hot week in the city. You could go to the cove and swim or row or crab. A few sailboats were beginning to bob at anchor in the cove: several

of the sailing sneak- boxes so useful in duck hunting season, a sixteen- foot Barnegat sneakbox of the type built and made famous by J. H. Perrine in Barnegat, a thirty-foot sloop called the Lotus.

There was a garvey named the Hajamac (for Haines-Jardin-McLaughlin) with an obstinate little motor. There was no sailboat racing because there weren't enough boats of any matching type. Near the cove was a small building housing a gasoline engine that pumped water into the Brant Beach water tower and that supplied electricity for the community. The water that came through the pipes was flavored with rust, and most people got drinking water from hand pumps in the dunes. Six nights a week the operator of the electric utility system flicked the master switch off and on at five minutes to ten, and there was a rush to light kerosene lamps before the electricity went off for the night, at ten. On Saturday nights, in honor of local bridge parties, the electricity was kept on until eleven or even midnight.

The ladies of Brant Beach, when they weren't spending hours over their wood-burning stoves or fighting their losing battles with children tracking in sand, found they didn't have quite enough excitement. They began campaigning for a pavilion on the dunes where they could sit and talk and cool off and watch their children on the beach. So an open pavilion was built in 1918 on a dune at the ocean end of Farragut avenue.

Out of the Community, a Club that was formed to build the pavilion gradually developed into the Brant Beach Yacht Club. The pavilion itself ended,

after various travels, as the framework for the dockmaster' s house beside the present Yacht Club dock. During the Nineteen-Twenties Brant Beach added about twenty more cottages, and University of Pennsylvania physical instructor J. Leonard Mason started Camp Miquon for boys on the dunes between 57th and 59th streets. The camp built a dock in the cove near the public dock, and the cove became the center for greatly increased activity in swimming and sailing.

The ladies of Brant Beach, not wanting to miss all this activity, decided that the pavilion should be moved to the cove. In 1927 the pavilion journeyed to the bay end of Farragut avenue, and was partly enclosed for dressing rooms. And, on August 8, 1927, the Brant Beach Yacht Club was formally incorporated "to promote yachting, boating and rowing, and to foster and encourage athletic sports upon the water and to promote the general welfare of Brant Beach."

It would be nice to be able to report that this produced a quick upsurge of "yachting, boating, rowing and athletic sports upon the water." But it did not. Frankly, the ladies of Brant Beach merely wanted a community building where they could have more than the three tables of bridge to which the size of most cottages limited them. The younger people were thinking in terms of a place to hold dances to the music of phonograph records featuring the bands of George Olson, Duke Ellington and others; they were tired of driving to Beach Haven in order to dance in the Engleside ballroom to the tame rhythms of the hotel's three-piece orchestra.

The Brant Beach Yacht Club devoted its energies to raising money for a real

clubhouse and, in spite of the depression, funds were collected by 1933. A modest clubhouse was built in that year inside the northerly point of the cove, on land conveyed to the Club by the community's patron, Henry B. McLaughlin.

The new clubhouse was not a real success. Probably the depression was a factor. But also the Brant Beach Yacht Club was not really a yacht club. It was looked on mainly as a social center, and two groups of people - the ladies of the community, and the younger people - had very different ideas of what a social center should be. The ladies either wanted to hold bridge parties or to sit around watching the young people have a good time. The young people wanted to have a good time but couldn't have it with their mothers watching. These opposing forces pulled and tugged at the Brant Beach Yacht Club and, like a boat with two skippers, the Club made poor headway.

Perhaps in the long run this problem would have been solved. But there were clouds on the horizon much darker than summer thunderheads. A war came. Summer cottages stayed closed. Oil from lost tankers stained the white beaches. Young people put away their phonographs and sneakboxes, and set off across bodies of water far larger than Barnegat Bay. The Brant Beach Yacht Club foundered and sank, a small casualty of a worldwide storm.



Captain John Brown was one of those quiet, slow-spoken, steady men of a type often produced by seacoast villages. Born in Parkertown on the mainland

near Tuckerton, he came from a family that had lived for generations in the Barnegat Bay area. Early in the Twentieth Century he moved to Long Beach Island to run the old Peahala Club for fishermen and gunners, and in the middle of the Nineteen-Twenties came to Brant Beach and saw the cove and decided that it was the place for him. He got permission from Henry B. McLaughlin (who owned the waterfront on the bay) to put in a public dock and to rent rowboats.

"Captain Brown loved kids," a friend recalled. "He liked having a dock where they could play. Probably, he lent more boats to them than he ever rented.

Each Fall he took down his dock pilings and all, to save it from the ice of winter, and each spring he pumped the pilings back in with a three- inch hand pump. He was not the kind of native who resented summer people and looked on them only as a source of income. He was glad to see them come each spring - especially the children - and sorry to see them leave every Fall.

"By the later part of the war years he had become a sick man," said one of the founders of the new Brant Beach Yacht Club. He worried about what the kids would do for a place to swim and row and sail, after he was gone. We used to sit on his dock and listen to him argue that there ought to be a yacht club around here. We heard it so often that it became a painful subject to us.

"Finally, one day late in June of 1947, about ten of us were on John Brown's dock and he brought up the subject again. We listened to him and looked at his earnest face and then looked at each other. Somebody said, 'Well, why don't we

do it?' So we held a meeting right then on the dock and decided to start a Brant Beach Yacht Club."

The next Sunday, R. M. Batchelor and Raymond Vidinghoff went around knocking on cottage doors in Brant Beach, selling people on the idea of a yacht club and calling a meeting to organize it. About fifteen prospective members showed up for the meeting, which officially voted the Brant Beach Yacht Club into existence and elected Batchelor as Commodore, Dr. Eugene J. Kelly as Vice Commodore Anthony Robi Tsek as Secretary-Treasurer and Vidinghoff as Chairman of the Membership Committee.

The fifteen members sat down to see what they had beside a name. It turned out they didn't have much. The old pavilion at the foot of Farragut avenue had been tipped askew by the hurricane of 1944, and the new Club didn't own it anyway. The clubhouse on the northern point had been abandoned by the old Brant Beach Yacht Club and had been moved away. The land on which it stood had reverted to Henry B. McLaughlin.

As a matter of fact the new Brant Beach Yacht Club didn't even own its name, because that was the property of the old Brant Beach Yacht Club, a corporation whose trustees had gone elsewhere,

The new Club had, however, some assets that were highly valuable even though they wouldn't have shown up on an accountant's balance sheet. It had

Captain John Brown, a gnarled old bayman who wanted to leave something behind for the children. It had fifteen members who were humming like high-powered dynamos with the idea of getting a real yacht Club going. And the new Club had the times in its favor. Energies that had been held back during the war were ready to explode all over the country in private and civic projects of one sort or another, Brant Beach was doubling its pre-war size almost every time you looked around. The great post-war boom was getting under way.

And, although the new Brant Beach Yacht Club didn't know it yet, the Club had an enormous asset in Henry B. McLaughlin,

Captain John Brown offered to ask Mr. McLaughlin if the Club might have the old pavilion and perhaps a little land to put it on. Mr. McLaughlin was, understandably, a bit doubtful; he had already seen the original Brant Beach Yacht Club go under for lack of proper interest and planning.

"If the new Club can stay alive for a year," he said, "and if it will put in the shallow end of a good dock, I'll put in the T on the deepwater end and deed the Club the land for it."

If the Club could stay alive! The fifteen members intended to do much better than that. During the first summer of 1947 the original members paid five years of dues in advance, and by Labor Day had collected more than \$3,200.

In 1948, with Batchelor serving another year as Commodore, the little cove saw much activity. The new dock with its deepwater T was in place. The harbor

was dredged. A patch of good sand was located underwater in one section of the cove, and pumped ashore to form a bathing beach. The old pavilion was moved across to the south side of Farragut avenue and enclosed. It wasn't very big, but it provided a place for storage and for the children of members to use on rainy days. Mr. McLaughlin deeded the Club the two lots on which the rebuilt pavilion stood, and leased the Club four more lots for five years, at a dollar a year, with an option to buy.

Dr. Eugene J. Kelly was Commodore in 1949. The cove didn't seem quite the same when the season opened, because a familiar face was gone. That June, Captain John Brown had died. He didn't leave much of an estate behind, unless you would count friendships and perhaps the sound of childrens' voices echoing over the cove.

During 1949 the Club bought two hundred feet of waterfront land between 61st and 62nd streets from Mr. McLaughlin, with riparian rights. This gave the Club its first hold on the cove, and guaranteed that it could not at any later date be cut off from the water. A patrol boat - Captain Brown's old garvey - was acquired for use in tending anchored boats and to patrol the races. In the same summer the new Club picked up a small legacy from the old Club. It was a Club burgee: one of the most colorful and appropriate ever designed for a yacht club. It showed the wild duck called the brant (for which Brant Beach was named) in black silhouette, flying across a yellow harvest moon against a dark blue sky.

Martin E. Goldman was Commodore in 1950. Now that the Club was

growing rapidly and acquiring property, the need of taking over legally from the old Brant Beach Yacht Club was apparent. Investigation showed that, of the three original trustees of the old corporation, two were deceased, The third, however, was living in Barnegat, and the widow of a second trustee was living in Florida and legally qualified to act for her late husband. So, at Club expense, Mrs. Louisa S. Durborow flew up from Florida, and Alphonse W. Kelley came over from Barnegat for the first (and last) meeting of the old Brant Beach Yacht Club in a dozen years. Lawyer and New Jersey State Senator Bruce A. Wallace set up the meeting carefully to fill all legal requirements, and if you ever want to take over from an inactive corporation, this is what you do:

Mrs. Durborow and Mr. Kelley called a meeting of the old Brant Beach Yacht Club, Incorporated, to order. 'They solemnly moved the election of Martin E. Goldman, Lester F. Lines and Wright E. Mcilroy as members. Then Mrs. Durborow and Mr. Kelley submitted their resignations as trustees of the Corporation, effective at the close of the meeting. By unanimous vote of the five members, Messr. Goldman, Lines and Mcilroy were elected Trustees of the Corporation for the coming year. The meeting then adjourned. Another meeting was convened at once by the three new Trustees, and Mr. Goldman was elected Chairman of the Trustees with Mr. Lines being elected Secretary. Then Mr. Goldman was elected President of the Brant Beach Yacht Club, a Corporation. Mr. Lines was elected Secretary and Mr. Mcilroy became Treasurer.

Probably this was the only meeting in history of the Trustees of the Brant Beach Yacht Club at which nobody argued with anybody or forgot that there was

a motion on the floor.

During 1951 and 1952, with K. Russel Knoblauch and Harry I. Lutz as Commodores, the Club continued its steady growth, buying the lots that had originally been leased from Mr. McLaughlin, installing a parking area, putting a davit on the dock for the launching of boats, and building a tramrail system for the launching of Ousters.

Arnold C. Pierce was Commodore in 1953 and 1954. In the first year, the Club started its unusual and highly successful program for juniors, under the guidance of William H. James as Committee Chairman. This amounted, in effect, to starting a day camp, and harried mothers throughout Brant Beach and several other Island communities were able, for once, to get at least a few hours a day of vacation. Paid counselors ran the program for juniors, training them in swimming, sailing and seamanship, and conducting games and picnics.

By 1954 the leading members of the Club decided that something had to be done about a real clubhouse. The enclosed pavilion was too small for sizeable meetings or social events, and the Township Municipal Building had to be used for any gathering of importance. A real clubhouse was needed, and for that the basic requirement was money. The Club didn't have much surplus; the regular income (plus many donations made quietly by members) had been spent almost as fast as it came in, for year-by-year improvements and for the important program for juniors.

Besides not having any money, the Club didn't have enough land for a real clubhouse.

Nobody stopped in despair at the thought of these problems. Member John B. Anderson, a builder from the suburban Philadelphia area, contributed plans for a large and pleasant clubhouse with wide porches on two sides, overlooking the shore and cove. Legally-minded members drew up a proposal for a change to a proprietary type of voting membership and a bond issue of \$25,000. Members who wished to become proprietors could qualify by buying one or more bonds at \$250 each.

Early in 1955, with Dr. Thomas S. Slack as Commodore, everything was ready - except for the actual money, the actual land and the actual construction of the new clubhouse. A visit to Mr. McLaughlin produced the land on terms most favorable to the Club. Members began subscribing for bonds, and several offered to underwrite whatever bonds remained unsold. A line of credit was extended by the Beach Haven National Bank.

In March of 1955 everything was set but the construction of the clubhouse. John B. Anderson took his plans to local builders. But the island was in the middle of a construction boom. Nobody would promise to build the clubhouse by the start of the season or even by the end of the season. Philadelphia Builder Anderson uttered some small and pardonable oaths and - just as individual Club members often did, when necessary - took things in his own hands. He called in his own building crews from Philadelphia, turned over his bayfront home to them

as living quarters, and started building the clubhouse.

"They weren't very happy living in Brant Beach that spring, away from their families," Mr. Anderson recalled. "I had to dig up a new crew about every two weeks. And the way they ate! I figured afterward that they put away thirty-five cents worth of my food for every hour they put in on the job."

Two hours before the formal dedication of the new clubhouse was scheduled, at the beginning of the 1955 season, the final work was done, and the clubhouse was ready to open.

Among other jobs completed that spring, the old clubhouse was moved up beside the dock, an area beside the dock was bulkheaded, a concrete slab was poured under the launching davit, a boat storage area was graded and gravelled, and the entire Club property was fenced. Considering the fact that, a year before, the Brant Beach Yacht Club had no money for such improvements and no land to put the improvements on, this was pretty good.

Under the Commodoreship of Fred W. Baldt, in 1956, the new clubhouse was further improved, the old pavilion was converted into a summer home for the dockmaster, and the popular program for juniors was expanded again. The operating structure of the Club was reorganized, in order to meet the needs of a much larger membership and bigger program.

Joseph W. Fullem was Commodore the next year, when a bond drive succeeded in selling the last of the one hundred Proprietary Bonds and the

indebtedness to the bank was wiped out. In 1958, Commodore Joseph L. Serrill, Jr., (previously a leader in developing the junior program) headed an administration that stepped up activities in all lines.

By 1959, Commodore A. Fred Spaeth took the helm of an organization that had made unbelievable progress in a mere twelve years. Membership, starting at fifteen in the opening year of 1947, had climbed close to two hundred. The Brant Beach Yacht Club owned a waterfront property stretching five hundred feet on Bayview avenue and around in a big arc for three hundred and twenty-five feet on Kimberly avenue, bordering the cove on the northerly side. An outside appraiser estimated the net worth of the Club at exactly \$94,635.21.

Captain John Brown would have been pleased.

IV

Little more than two weeks after the new Brant Beach Yacht Club was organized, cries of "Star-board!" and "Buoy Room!" began to echo over nearby waters as the Club ran its first sailboat races. The Beach Haven Times for July 15, 1947, carried a front-page report of the first race:

"The Brant Beach Yacht Club staged a spectacular race in the good breeze blowing on Saturday, July 12. There were a couple of near turnovers but all boats finished with the exception of a Duster sailed by Ben Sleeper which was forced out due to a split rudder. The winner was Jack Rattinger in a Bradford. Second was Mr.

Knoblauch and his daughter in a G Boat and third was John Hay in a Winabout."

Races that first summer would have horrified any proper member of the North American Yacht Racing Union. In general they were open races that any type of sailboat could enter without a handicap, and you were likely to see a haphazard collection of sneakboxes, Bradfords and Cranmers, a G sloop, Duster and even a lone Lightning jockeying for position at the start. The starts weren't very formal, either. No starting gun was used, and the skippers talked things over until everybody was ready and then made a running start at the government marker on the Inland Waterway off the northern point of the cove.

Jack Rattinger in a Bradford won the Senior trophy in 1947. Dick Wilson took the Junior trophy and John Megargee won the Cranmer trophy. Probably the most colorful sight in the early races was the wife of the president of a major Eastern college racing her sneakbox, wearing a big hat, long sleeves and gloves to guard against sunburn.

"She was a fine sailor, too." one member recalls.

During the first season it was decided that the Duster would make a good boat for juniors, and that a Lightning fleet ought to be organized. Over the winter there was frenzied building and buying of Dusters, and a fifteen-boat fleet was launched in 1948. Lester F. Lines, first owner of a Lightning, talked other members into moving into that class, and in 1948 Lightning Fleet No. 173 was chartered by the Lightning Class Association. The second year saw Lightnings, Cranmers, Ousters and sneakboxes racing in their own classes.

During 1948 a snub-nosed little boat could be seen scooting around the cove. It was a Moth that the Harold Clopps had bought in Ocean City, and with young Bob Clopp at the tiller, it kept beating all the sneakboxes. Club members liked its possibilities as a boat for young sailors, and by the next season a Moth fleet was raving – a fleet that has now become one of the biggest on the Jersey Coast. Formal starts, with a gun and hoisted signals, were also adopted in 1949.

In following years the Lightning and Moth fleets prospered, and in 1956 Dr. Thomas S. Slack led a successful drive to start a fleet of Blue Jays, the so-called little brother of the Lightning. Blue Jay Fleet No. 44 was chartered in 1958. As the Nineteen-Fifties drew near a close, about fifty boats in the Moth, Ouster, Blue Jay and Lightning classes were racing, and nearly a dozen of the sporty little Sailfish were starting to hold scratch races of their own. Several of the original classes dropped out. The sneakbox, so perfectly suited to sailing in Barnegat Bay waters, was too slow to hold racing interest against the faster Moths.

Bradforfs and Cranmers lost favor for racing because their designs were never carefully regulated, and it was possible to beat another skipper by out-building him rather than by out-sailing him. The Duster fleet, which at one time early in the Nineteen-Fifties became the largest in the country, remained in competition but declined in numbers. Comets raced for one season in 1951, failed to create much interest and dropped from the racing schedule. Considering the relatively small size and short racing history of the Brant Beach Yacht Club, it is likely that it has been one of the most active yacht clubs in the nation in holding

national championship regattas.

When the Club was little more than a year old, in 1948, it staged the first Duster National Championships ever held. This national regatta returned to Brant Beach in 1951, 1952, and 1954. In 1957 the Club was host to the North American Moth Championships, and in 1958 welcomed nearly a hundred competitors for the International Moth Championships.

Racing skippers from the cove did well in these and other events, Harry Mote won the National Duster Championship in 1953, and Tim Slack took the Junior title in the North American Moth Championships in 1957. From time to time Lightning Fleet No, 173 sent boats to other waters, and won trophies at Surf City, Brigantine and Bay Head. The Brant Beach waters and the tricky winds of summer teach skippers good seamanship. Thus members of the Club were not surprised to hear that, in a 1958 race at Bay Head during which a thunderstorm knocked out more than half of the boats in the race, Lightnings from Brant Beach churned happily across the finish line in first and second places.

So, as the Brant Beach Yacht Club completed its first decade and moved into its second, it could point proudly to a large group of racing sailors, half a hundred well-kept boats, tight competition and a good record in outside competition. This might be considered enough. But members of the Club like to put emphasis on something beyond fast boats and winning guns. The real aim of the Club can best be illustrated by an incident that happened in a Moth race.

Two Moths began jibing around a weather mark in a stiff breeze. One of them, sailed by a skipper who had a good chance to win the season's championship, completed the jibe successfully. The other boat capsized. The skipper who was competing for the championship only hesitated for a moment. Then he brought his Moth about and sailed back to see if the other skipper needed help.

Of course it cost him his chance for the title. Man is a social creature who will go to great trouble to get up a group activity. There are few group activities, however, that involve as much trouble as a yacht club. All during the Fall, Winter and Spring, committees and individuals work hard to prepare for a season of slightly more than two months. There are committees planning membership drives, activity for small fry and juniors, dances and social nights, photography contests, races, regattas, picnics, beach and swimming supervision, life saving classes and patrol work during races. Budgets have to be worked out as carefully as for any business enterprise.

Long range planning for the Club's future has to be done. There are hundreds of details to be settled by correspondence:

Dear Mr. So-and-So - Our records show that you have not yet paid the mooring fee for your boat last season. It would be appreciated if...

Dear Wally - We need a racing committee Chairman, and nobody could do the job better than you. So I hope you will accept this assignment again...

Dear Batch - No doubt you will recall the special projects that were entrusted to your care during the recent meeting...

Dear Mr. Mayor - At the last meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Brant Beach Yacht Club, the need for a traffic light on Bay avenue in the vicinity of the Club was discussed...

Why do people put in so much time and effort working for a yacht club? How is it that you find lawyers, doctors, executives of substantial businesses, and successful men of every type devoting countless hours to such an enterprise? Certainly there is small reward in having the privilege of signing "Commodore" to Yacht Club letters, and wearing a blue coat with three gold stars a few times a year, and perhaps flying the Commodore's Flag now and then on your boat. Even these scraps of recognition do not come to many of the working members. What repays a Racing Committee for sitting on the stand until the last Moth or Blue Jay straggles in? What recompense does the Protest Committee have, when it spends an hour or so in serious consideration of a small boy's plaint? ("Sally was barging at the start and, ... " "We were coming up to the weather mark and Billy didn't give me room and... ") Why do men contribute the money for six prams in kit form, and then spend night after night during the spring putting the prams together and painting them, so that any small Junior may go sailing during the summer? Why do people give up their summer weekends to patrol races and make sure that every sailboat gets back safely? Why will a women's committee devote weeks to organizing a Chinese auction so that the Club can have new

furniture? (It is rumored that merchants in a wide area shudder when they hear that the BBYC women are organizing another Chinese auction, and are on their way to ask for contributions; one such auction made more than \$800 for the Club in a single night.)

It not only takes time and energy to create and operate a yacht club but also it takes money. The Brant Beach Yacht Club holds down its dues and charges to a figure that can fit comfortably into the summer budget of the average family, and there is never enough money from regular income to pay both for operations and for expansion. Year after year, extra needs are met by a few men talking things over. ("We really need a new davit, don't we? Well, if you'll get an estimate I'll send you a check over to cover it.") Of the Club's net worth of nearly \$100,000, it is likely that at least twenty-five percent came from such quiet contributions, not counting the contributions of Henry B. McLaughlin.

If you talk to some of the men who have been most active in building up the Brant Beach Yacht Club, and ask why they have put so much time and money into it, their first reaction to the question is a rather startled one.

"Why have I put so much into it? You know, I never gave it much thought..."

Then, as they think it over, they will come out with, an answer that you can quote if you want. It is a practical answer, because these are practical men who expect to find a practical reason for anything they do.

"Why do I spend so much time on Yacht Club work? It's a nice change and relaxation from my business..."

"You want an honest answer? I get a lot of fun out of it..."

"Sure if I put all that Yacht Club time into my regular work, I'd make more money, but I really enjoy doing it..."

But if you probe long enough, you can dig up another set of answers, and these are ones on which the Commodores and Secretaries and Treasurers and Committee Chairmen don't really want to be quoted. They don't want to be quoted - these practical businessmen and professional men - because it makes them sound a bit too emotional. The reasons are these:

"I suppose the real reason is that I think we're achieving something worth while..."

"It brought me a lot closer to my children ... "

"The reward is in watching all the kids grow up in a good healthy environment... "

"We've managed to create a real family atmosphere in the Club. It's good for the adults as well as for the children... "

Perhaps there is another small reward at the end of each season for the Commodores and Secretaries and Treasurers and Committee Chairmen. When the last race has been sailed and the final winning gun has been fired, members of the Brant Beach Yacht Club meet in the club house for the presentation of prizes. The room is filled with bronzed youngsters who have learned to compete hard and within the rules, and they step forward happily to get their awards. It is a moment when people who have worked to make the season a success may well

feel that it has been worthwhile.

Yacht Clubs are not the most important things in the world, and no doubt the social fabric of the country would not collapse if all of them disappeared overnight. And yet an organization like the Brant Beach Yacht Club stands for something of real value. It is a product of the traditional American urge to work together, and to create something that will make a community a better place in which to live.

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Membership in the Brant Beach Yacht Club is not closed, and congenial new members will be welcomed. In addition to regular memberships, it is possible to obtain a guest membership for a season. Information may be obtained from Club members and from the Membership Committee in regard to application for membership.

