

THE SNIPE STORY

A World Organization Now Includes Nearly 10,000 of the 15½-ft. Sloops

By WILLIAM F. CROSBY

BACK IN 1931, when the Snipe was first introduced to the public, little did any of us think that it would develop into a truly worldwide organization with not far from 10,000 numbered boats and more than 350 fleets in some 30-odd countries. Frankly, if this little 15½-footer had to be designed over again, there would be some extensive changes made not only in the lines but also in the construction, to simplify the work and to make it easier for amateurs to build their own boats. But don't think that the amateurs have not built Snipes anyway. A conservative estimate would indicate that probably close to half of the existing boats have been built by their owners, both here and abroad. Building a fleet of Snipes, as a club project for the winter months, seems to be a favorite pastime and innumerable clubs have done it.

In a short subject such as this, it is not the intent to go into the history of the class and its phenomenal growth both before, during, and after World War II. Actually Spain built and raced some 800-odd Snipes during the late fracas and, for that matter, is still building them.

But, let's go back to just after the war, in the summer of 1946, to be exact. At that time the so-called international championships were to be held by Lake Chautauqua Yacht Club in western New York state and, as was usual at that time, entries were confined to exactly one member from any given fleet. The big surprise came when it was discovered that for the first time the "internationals" were really going to be international in scope. Everyone was surprised when we found an entry coming in from Geneva, Switzerland. Then came Rio de Janeiro in Brazil, Portugal and Newfoundland. Boats were loaned to the entries from Portugal and Switzerland, but the others brought their own Snipes, Brazil by an army airplane.

During this regatta one of these entries made a remark about not realizing that he had to race against the entire United States in a regatta of this type so the Governors immediately took steps to avoid such a situation, with possible international ill-feeling, the following year.

At the annual meeting that winter it was decided to retain the original trophy which had been presented by Dr. Hub E. Isaacks, of Fort Worth, back in 1934. A new deed of gift designated it as truly for the international championship, with but one entry for any one nation. In the meantime, the then commodore of the association, Charles Heinzerling, decided that it would be a smart idea to have a new trophy just for the U.S. national championships. Consequently, he designed and had made a special trophy which has been raced for, ever since, only in the United States.

The idea of an international championship really took hold and the following summer, 1947, 13 nations raced for the cup on Lake Lemán at Geneva, Switzerland. The nations represented included Argentina, Norway, Italy, Switzerland, Portugal, Spain, Canada, France, Brazil, Great Britain, Belgium, Hungary, and the U.S. Boats were supplied by the host fleet and were drawn previous to each race. This series, of course, set all of Europe to talking about Snipe racing with the result that there were numerous new fleets and boats built during the year.

In 1948 the internationals, or, as they were now called, the world's championships, were held under the Spanish Snipe Federation at Palma de Mallorca, off the eastern coast of Spain. This federation, by the way, represented nearly 1,000 boats now with fleets scattered in nearly every important town on the Spanish peninsula as well as across the straits in North Africa. The Spanish Government built a special fleet of Snipes for this regatta—15 of them, all exactly alike. All skippers, crews and national secretaries were guests of the Snipe Federation and Franco himself gave the main prize to be held for permanent possession. Fiesta lasted for days at Palma, according to those who were present. For the first time, the trophy was won outside the United States and the brothers Jorge and Carlos Vilar Castex, of Argentina, took it back to South America. This gave Sniping a big boost in South America.

At each of these meets a considerable number of national secretaries were present and meetings were held at which just about everything was suggested, from requiring all Snipes to carry oars and oarlocks to completely reregging and changing the original design. Like the United Nations, everyone had a different pet idea.

In 1949, the World's Championships were held at the Larchmont (N.Y.) Yacht Club with nine nations sending representatives. Ted Wells, the "Wizard of Wichita," won

The Brazilian crew hikes out in an International race

Rosenfeld





Snipe fleet at Nyon before the 1948 Swiss national championships (above)



The Spanish government built these Snipes (below) for the 1948 World's Championship at Mallorca

the series for the second time (he had won in Switzerland in 1947). Countries competing this time were Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Cuba, England, Norway, Spain, Switzerland, and the United States. In point of number of nations entered it was, so far as we can determine, the largest international regatta ever held in the United States.

To reduce somewhat the expense of holding these regattas, and in order for some of our friends to the south and east to get straightened out a little after the series, it was decided at this time to limit the holding of the World's Championships to every other year. Everyone seemed to be in favor of this and it still holds true today. At the same time, it was decided to open up a little on the U.S. National Championships by allowing more than one boat from a fleet to enter. The new rule, and one still in force, limits the entries to one boat for every five active boats in any given fleet. This brought more than 50 U.S. Snipes to the National Championships in 1952.

On the even-numbered years between the World's Championships, Europe had its own championship regatta and a special trophy was given for the new Western Hemisphere Championship. The first regatta for this John T. Hayward Trophy was held at Havana, Cuba, and much to the joy of the Cubans their own Dr. Clemente Inclan was the winner. Because only five nations were eligible to compete at that time, the entry list was raised to two from each.

In 1951, the boys having had such a good time in Havana the year before, the same fleets, headed by Commodore Rafael Posso, asked for and held the World's Championships. Jorge and Carlos Vilar Castex again walked off with the trophy and once more Argentina got a big kick out of it. The U.S. entry was second and Denmark third.

This past year the Western Hemispheres again came to the front, this time at Clearwater Yacht Club, in Florida. Ten skippers competed from five nations—Canada, Bermuda, U.S., Cuba, Brazil. There were two skippers from each and boats were loaned by the host club and drawn for just previous to each race. Once more Ted Wells was the winner but Dr. Inclan, of Cuba, was not far behind. In order to be eligible to compete here, Wells and the other U.S. skipper, Morris Whitney, of Clearwater, had soundly drubbed some 50 other Snipes at the National Championships at Green Lake, Wis.

And while the Western Hemisphere Championships were going on, the Skovshoved Yacht Club, near Copenhagen, Denmark, was holding the European Championships. Ten nations each sent one skipper, complete with boat, sails and

crew. This was the first time this had happened. According to the data on this regatta there were more nations represented at this Snipe regatta than at any of the sailing events at the Olympics in nearby Finland. Eric Barford, of Norway, won the series. In order, the other nations were, France, Italy, Spain, England, Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Switzerland, and Belgium. Even the staid British yachting magazines admitted that it was quite an affair, especially when, in one race, four or five boats crossed the finish line in less than

30 seconds. The outstanding point here is that each of these boats had been built in a different country by different builders. It was stated that, despite this, the boats were extremely evenly matched.

Now everyone is looking forward to the 1953 World's Championships which will be held starting Sept. 5, 1953, at Monte Carlo, with racing on the open Mediterranean. As in 1953, each nation will hold national championships and the winner will become his nation's representative. From present indications, it will no doubt be the largest in point of nations ever held by any class. At the European Championships last fall the skippers present voted to bring their own boats for the 1953 event and this has been approved by the Board of Governors in recent meeting. This will mean some extremely hot competition but it will be quite expensive for Western Hemisphere nations to send skipper, crew, and boat. However, plans are already on foot to at least help defray the cost so far as the U.S. entry is concerned. It is planned, at the National Championships in 1953, to have each entry chip in with a certain entrance fee. All the money so raised is to be turned over to the winner and based on the entry list of the last year or so, the winner should receive a tidy sum. Not enough to cover the trip, but something to get started with.

Of course, the language difficulty still plays a part in international affairs of this scope, but usually the national secretary of each country is someone who can at least understand English. In most countries the parent Association supplies a small number of rule and record books which are translated into French, Spanish, Norwegian, or Portuguese, and then given out to the local fleets. In most countries, also, the restriction and measurement sheets are translated, but Ted Wells, who is chairman of the International Rules Committee, has had his hands full trying to explain in three or four languages just how the restrictions should be handled. During the past year a number of Snipes were built professionally in both Italy and France and measurers began peppering Mr. Wells with queries regarding stem dimensions and measurement. Someone had discovered that a little extra waterline length made quite an improvement in speed and, with competition running high in Europe, each nation has been doing everything possible to take every advantage allowed in the restrictions. However, Mr. Wells has handled it all in a masterful manner and if he keeps on, he will, no doubt, shortly be named to assist Mr. Dulles!

The Snipe Class International Racing Assn. has not been

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land sermon, though the clam part of the stew was very tasty. The southeaster left us at China Point and we foolishly made vain efforts to sail without wind, hanging out the main, forestays'l, jib, yankee, and sprit tops'l all at once, and going exactly nowhere. About four we turned on the Falcon and proceeded to Avalon under power. There we stayed for two lazy days.

Friday we sailed up the north shore to Emerald Bay, arriving in time to get a few abalones for the Captain's Dinner on Friday night, our last night out. The girls concocted a gaudy punch in the removable galley sink, made leis from an unmentionable source of paper on board, guitar music was played, and all made merry. The prettiest sight of the trip was seen 20 miles across the San Pedro Channel where, in the unusually clear atmosphere, the sharp silhouette of the San Pedro Hills stood out boldly against the galaxy of bright lights in Los Angeles beyond.

The saddest part of the voyage arrived Saturday when, after a tingling sail across the San Pedro Channel in a fresh, bright westerly, we had to say goodbye to the *Renegade* and leave her at her mooring. The crew agreed that she was indeed a vessel at home in the blue Pacific.

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slow in recognizing the importance of the international aspects of the class and officers have leaned over backward to create and maintain interest. In the past few years a few honorary vice-commodorees have been appointed among foreign yachtsmen who should be so honored but at the annual meeting in New York in January, the Board of Governors voted to go one step further. During the coming year each of the national secretaries will be asked to hold an election among his nationals to determine some outstanding Snipe worker who would be accepted as a full-fledged member of the Board of Governors next January.

This is decidedly not an "honorary" position but a working job for someone who can give the time necessary. A small executive committee will handle the usual run of business to come up, but when important decisions are to be made each member will be polled by mail. This will mean, of course, that each nation will fit more closely into the Snipe picture and each will have a definite say in the policies of the Association. It is believed and hoped that this is a step in the right direction and beyond this we can visualize, in a few years' time, meetings of perhaps the Board or a small committee held yearly in Europe, South America, or North America.

The international aspect is not to be lost sight of and everything possible is being done to give Snipe skippers from far off Mozambique, Japan, and Nova Scotia every possible opportunity to take part actively in the organization. In this respect the Snipe Assn. has even printed an eight-page monthly bulletin which is sent to skippers here in the States but also to most of the countries in Europe and in South America. Although it is printed in English, it is truly amazing how someone always manages to get vital parts of it translated into his native tongue.

There are active Snipe fleets in such places as the Canary Islands; Teneriffe; Algiers; Laurenc Marques; Lima, Peru; Agadir, Morocco; Luanda, Angola; Balearic Islands; several fleets in Japan and a great many others. While the U.S. still leads in number of fleets and boats, Europe is fast catching up and while no actual count is possible we would guess that there are around 1000 Snipes in Spain, 500 in France, 600 in Italy, 200 in Portugal and probably another 300 in the Scandinavian countries. Britain has around 200, including the fleets in Northern Island and Scotland. In South America, Brazil is the most active country, but recently Chile, Peru, and Uruguay have caught the fever badly. Argentina has its own troubles but Snipe racing continues, more or less isolated.

A number of years ago, the Strangford Lough Yacht Club, about 12 miles from Belfast in Northern Ireland, sent out an

invitation to Snipes in Great Britain for a championship of the British Isles. In winding up, we would like to quote directly from this invitation:

"There are no hotels near Whiterock, so unless you bring your own car, when it will be possible for you to stay in Belfast and motor up and down for the racing, you and your crew will have to put up with the Irish hospitality of our members. If you don't know what this is—come and find out. It has been favorably reported on by such English Snipe owners as have strayed to our waters. If you can come we will make every effort to give you a good time. Weather permitting, the Celtic twilight will be turned on at 11:00 p.m. each evening, and the local Banshee is a very fine mezzo-soprano. Apart from local color we have many interesting and primitive customs; some of us sail our Snipes sharp end first, as we think they go faster that way; and others find the metal centerplate so handy for cutting other people's moorings that they carry it down even when going to windward. All our protests are, of course, settled with shillelaghs in front of the clubhouse, but visitors will be given choice of weapons, and their Executors may appeal to the Y.R.A."

FOR THE GIRLS WHO GO CRUISING

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electric toaster, percolater, heaters, and almost hating to admit it, Mrs. Farnsworth adds, two electric blankets. A good, hearty cold-weather lunch that is one of her specialties sounds delicious and can be made entirely in a double boiler. She combines one can of undiluted chicken noodle soup and one of cream of celery or mushroom, one can of evaporated milk and two cans of lobster meat, cut up. Just before serving add two tablespoons of bourbon. This is served with toasted English muffins, fruit and brownies or cookies (never cake, as it is too apt to get in a mess). Like the majority of

others, her preference for cooking utensils is stainless steel.

Before shipping *Laughing Gull* to Norway, Mrs. Chubb completely stocked the boat with food for five persons for three weeks. They had been warned they would have great difficulty buying anything. Coffee, sugar, cheese and chocolate were rationed—chicken was unobtainable—vegetables scarce except cabbage, and no citrus fruits at all. Meat, fish, and Norwegian canned goods were plentiful, also cherries, strawberries, hot house tomatoes and milk if you brought your own bottle. They had no problems with the language as almost every 12-year-old speaks English, and only once during their entire stay did she find herself in a shop where no one spoke English. She had a phrase book, but to the children's joy came home with a huge steak weighing two kilos instead of two pounds. When lobsters are served aboard *Laughing Gull*, they are served with an old fashioned can opener for each person.

As most of us know, *Caribbee* has made herself a famous ocean racing and cruising record. Last summer she raced from Bermuda to England following the Bermuda Race, and while Mrs. Mitchell was not aboard, she had much to do with provisioning the boat. Both she and her husband are great cooks and gourmets, and he was most pleased to find how satisfactory canned food could be over a period of time. There were nine on board for 21 days and there was no ice even at the start. The only fresh foods were cabbages, onions, eggs (which had been coated), and part of the potato supply. They had a good canned bread. Obviously cooking on that trip was a full time job and the man who did it managed so well—not only planning and shopping, but even more important, in the actual preparation of the meals—that no one felt any real lack of fresh things in his diet.

The problem of no ice comes again from Mrs. Brown and Mrs. Warden, who were amazed to find how well they managed in the Virgin Islands. Eggs and butter kept two weeks, bread five days, milk two. At Roadtown, Tortola,

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