

The Amateur Yachtsman



BY DUDLEY C. LUNT

DEFINITELY there is an advantage in being an amateur. Unlike the professional, you do not have to be right. You have no cult to proclaim, to maintain, or to defend; no crusade to lead. Your ego will generally stand without hitching, nor does it require props to support it. You are, in short, that *rara avis*, a free man. Free — one asks — for what? Free to enjoy yourself, son, to the hilt and without stint.

Particularly is this the case with yachting. You take that little period before the start of the race — the rendezvous, they call it. A slight mist arising from the flat calm surface of the bay obscures the shore, giving the illusion of being at sea — off soundings, in professional parlance. Here within a radius of half a mile of the Committee Boat cluster seventy-odd craft ranging from the simple sloop of modest dimension on up through cutters, yawls, and ketches to large-size schooners, known in the amateur's odd fund of ancient lore as fore-and-afters. On this tack and that, they drift — to the eye of the amateur — in utter confusion, with infrequent cat's-paws, the harbingers of the coming breeze,

shunting them to and fro. But it is not so. The shrewd eyes of the man at the tiller, fingering the while the stop watch that hangs from his neck by a lanyard, give sudden sharp glances to the quarter where wind is presaged, and his experienced mind calculates to a nicety its advantage in crossing the line. Meanwhile, between the lolling figures that decorate the decks with splashes of color in gay shirting, bright slacks, or often a mere flaming clout, there passes a medley of friendly badinage — challenges, joking advice, wolf whistles, bets and banter.

This is a pleasant interlude and the amateur yachtsman enjoys it savouringly. Having no assigned station, he eases himself down into the companionway. Here he will offend no man, being utterly out of the way. Nor will the boom knock him on the head should the boat come about or jibe. But the real point from the amateur's angle is that, from this station amidships, he has the best vantage of all for enjoying the show. And the show is about to open, for there goes the warning gun.

Providentially the cat's-paws have now merged into a freshening breeze.

Sailing on the starboard tack, a thick cluster of craft moves in swift unison toward the invisible line that lies betwixt a red buoy and the Committee Boat. The badinage ceases, and the once-lolling figures now stand by sheet and halyard — keen, alert, and poised for instant action. To leeward a big sloop tries to jockey her way ahead — to windward a yawl bears down. As they sail on and on, our three courses converge, closer and closer, until one could leap to the deck of either. It looks like the big squeeze.

Then as stays and spreaders are just about to entangle, sharp orders ring out; sheets are hauled; the tiller swings; and the yawl to starboard bears up, losing headway slightly. In that instant the line is crossed, and from away down wind there comes the faint report of the starting gun. For close-hauled tension and an unparalleled mounting of excitement, give me the closely contested start of a yacht race — such is the reflection of the amateur standing there in the waist.

Now each course begins to diverge, and soon the field is spread wide with white sails aslant over blue water on different tacks. Here enters the ineluctable human element — judgment as to wind and tide based upon an expert knowledge of the capabilities of one's craft. This evokes in the amateur a recollection of the highest encomium one true-born Downeaster can pay to

another. In a clipped and close-reefed statement, he'll be heard to mutter, as if it hurt: "Henry's an able man, by God — got judgment in a fog."

With the rounding of the first mark, an unforgettable sight comes into focus. On this leg the wind will be astern, a mite on the starboard quarter. As sloop follows sloop and ketch follows yawl in a swift succession of coming about, there blossoms from the masthead of each a burst of billowing white canvas. Then the wind fills it, puffing it far out beyond the bow in a vast ballooning. This, in the parlance of the sport, is the setting of the spinnaker. On this enormous bellying sail, the sun casts the reflection of the mainsail, and then the eye delights in a superb procession of heavily canvassed yachts down wind.

In the setting of the soft haze of an Indian Summer afternoon, scene after scene of white sail upon blue water is etched upon the plates of the memory. There is that lazying along, after the race is over, three yachts abreast and all hands in easy converse. Then occurs an easing alongside, that a plate of lobster salad may be passed on board for sampling. And good it was, first class.

Comes the bitter cold of winter, the routine of to work and to home, the grind of the subway, the pitiless barrenness of city streets — then all this and more is at the command of the mind of the amateur yachtsman.

Rid Us of REDS!

*A Former Union Member's Experience Sheds
Light Upon Un-American Trends Today*

By CHET SCHWARZKOPF

I FIRST joined a union back in 1919, after serving in the Navy in World War I, and a proud youngster I was. Organization, as an academic theory, should apply equally to labor, capital, the professions, and business — or so I saw it then. What I did not understand was its application to human capacity.

In 1939, I turned back my last union card, vowing never to carry another . . . but with regret, since good organization belongs with good government. We need it. Today, many national affiliates have come to evaluate what America really means, and are ridding their unions of pro-Communist liabilities. The road to disaster is all too plainly marked, now.

During that first-time union experience in 1919-21, I was told by older members always to "do what the union says, kid." The I.W.W. (remember that?) was lighting the way. Some day, the One Big Union would take over the government, and everything would be different. The I.W.W. lies mouldering in its grave, but its thesis goes marching

on. They call it Communism now.

I voted for Socialist Gene Debs for President in 1920, and all but joined the I.W.W. I had just turned twenty-one then, and liked neither Republicans nor Democrats. By 1924, my circumstances had improved to such an extent that I voted for Coolidge, feeling quite substantial and grown-up.

Came the 1930's, and I had to start all over again — broke and in a strange town.

Again I applied to join a union, and as gladly as the first time, since its card would mean a well-paid job in a closed-shop plant. True, there was some bit of connivance, and the foreman — himself a union member — had an itching palm which he felt needed surcease. I was given a bad time for refusing to pay off, but brushed that aside as irrelevant. Organization was the basic motif and, through that, a living wage.

One of the first things I learned, upon being allowed to join that union after a year's anxious hanging on at permit work, was that it was at war with another union. This