

## LWH REGATTA SPEECH@INDIAN HARBOR Y.C., 09/25/14

On behalf of the our family, I want to thank you for including us in these inaugural events, and allowing me the opportunity to share some personal insight on your Regatta's namesake, my mother, Lorna Whittelsey Hibberd.

Growing up in Greenwich on Pecksland Road, Mom began sailing at the age of 6 out of Indian Harbor. She won the first of five Adams Cups at the age of 15. Pictures of her as a teenager on the dock show her modeling her signature sailing line which consisted of specially tailored overalls. This was the result of a compromise brokered by my grandmother which kept her from showing too much leg without having to be constrained by the long flowing skirt favored by her father as the appropriate sailing attire for young ladies of her era. She went on to win 4 more Women's National Championships over the next 7 years, a record that I believe extends to this day. Along the way she consistently won a variety of one design victories against all comers of either sex, including future America's Cup Winner Bus Mosbacher, who testified at her 75th birthday celebration that he has yet to beat her. She also had the opportunity to skipper the J Boat Vanitie leading an amateur contingent of 5 and a professional crew of 20 (ah the good old days). Among her many feminine 1sts was to crew in the 1934 Bermuda Race aboard Stormy Weather.

In 1935 her solo skippering career came to a close when she married my dad, Fred Hibberd. Together, they went on to have a very successful racing partnership on our family's cruising boats, several of which were designed by my father. You could often find Indian Harbor's own Souther (Chick) Whittelsey and my Aunt Harriet on the crew, when they weren't campaigning their L16 here.

In their courting days, Mom sailed out of Indian Harbor and Dad sailed out of Larchmont so they split the difference and settled on American Yacht Club where they ended up being life long members. In fact, my Dad achieved member #1 status for a while, which he referred to as a dubious distinction that you don't aggressively seek, since there is after all, only one way to lose that top spot.

While she largely left the tiller over the ensuing years to raise me, my brother Fred, my sister Beth, who are by the way Long Island Sound Champions in their own right, she remained a serious student of the sport of competitive sailing. She read voraciously, attended seminars and sucked up every bit of knowledge she could regarding tactics, sail trimming and seamanship.

While she utilized her formidable skill set to great effect over the years racing with my dad, perhaps her greatest legacy on the water was to teach young sailors to become competent ocean racing crew members, when she founded and directed AYC's big boat junior racing program. As Commodore T Vincent Learson described it, "I was always glad to have Mrs. Hibberd aboard, since she was an extraordinary strategist and a great organizer of crews, throughout a race, and even on a cruise, she would continually check on crew positions and offer advice. I watched and listened to her instruct, and I can see how she and Fred were able to win the Block Island Race 3 years in a row."

In the late seventies, Mom got back into serious racing on a grand scale by joining together with former AYC Commodores Dooie Isdale, Bert Jamison, and Eric Penniston to form the Fair American Syndicate. The first Fair American was a Ted Hood designed 1 ton and the 2<sup>nd</sup> one was a NY 36. They had a very successful run with both boats and Mom had a number of graduates from her big boat program join the crew. They always seemed to have a sailing rock star or two on the boat which created an abundance of chiefs often making decisions like which end of the line to start at, somewhat acrimonious and drawn out, but it was always understood that Lorna was in charge of the foredeck and sail trim no matter who was in the cockpit. During the New York Yacht Club Cruises, she could often be seen in a Bosun's chair either repairing a fitting above the spreaders or parasailing in it, utilizing the spinnaker as a chute.

As a testament of her competitive spirit and commitment to her fellow crew members, I offer the following story: during a race in the AYC fall series, Lorna had her right thumb almost completely severed in a winching accident. Her initial reaction was to direct the crew put her in a life raft and come back for her after they finished. Needless to say saner heads prevailed, and they broke off to meet the ambulance at the dock. She did manage to keep the thumb with some diminished capacity and circulation.

As you might expect, she was one of the pioneers of windsurfing on Long Island Sound. She became so proficient in our fluky winds, that she could get her hair done and still spend an afternoon windsurfing in the harbor without ruining her perm into her early 80's. Personally, I still spend far too much time going over board to windward to be able to duplicate her results.

Mom concluded her sailing career coming full circle by becoming a charter member of AYC's Ideal 18 program. Not only did she participate financially, but she frequently utilized her broad knowledge of sailing and seamanship to mentor female sailors new to the sport, to allow them to become more confident and proficient on the water. The Ideal was a great platform for learning and just having an enjoyable day of sailing. A competitor to the end, I have one final story that occurred in the early stages of her dementia. She and I had taken her Ideal, the Lorna, out for a sail one 4<sup>th</sup> of July. We went out to our destination Scotch Caps Bell 42 and were heading back into the harbor. In the meantime, a number to the AYC craft had assembled

at the bell for a harbor parade, which began soon after we rounded the bell. She looked astern and beamed, as she shouted exuberantly we're winning! Unfortunately, that was the end of her life on the water, as she dealt with the progressively degenerating effects of Alzheimers over the next 12 years.

To close, I would again thank the Indian Harbor membership for establishing this series in Mom's name, I know she would be thrilled with the honor. In addition, I would ask you to consider contributing to your local Alzheimer's and/or Hospice chapter as the needs are clear and both of these organizations do great work. Thank you.