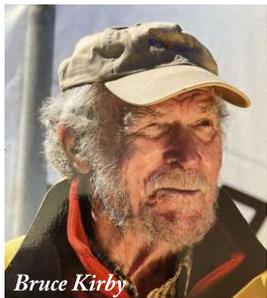


SONAR Fleet 23, the Nyack Story by Joe Pantalone

The 23' Sonar resulted from a futile search by Noroton Yacht Club for the perfect family day racer. After several years of looking, with no success, and with a set of criteria in hand, they turned to the venerable yacht designer Bruce Kirby, a member of Noroton YC. We at NBC are well acquainted with the work of Bruce Kirby. Three of our



Bruce Kirby

one-design classes: Laser, Sonar, and Ideal 18, are all his work. The Sonar turned out to be a favorite of Kirby. He campaigned his Sonar from its inception until he was 90, just a few years before his death last year.

The Sonar, designed in 1979, went into production in 1980. Sailors immediately recognized the vessel as fast, responsive as a racing dinghy, yet dry, comfortable, and easy to manage under a broad range of sailing conditions. Our venerable Dick Bracken saw the Sonar as ideally suited for racing on the Tappan Zee. He obtained the dealership rights for the south Hudson River area and brought the first Sonar to NBC in 1981. Unfortunately, though Dick was a visionary in this area, he was just a few years ahead of his time and abandoned his efforts to sell the Sonar in 1983.

In 1987, Steve Mojo brought Sonar 364 to NBC. Shortly after that, Steve had the confidence to register us as a fleet with the Sonar Class Association. He began sailing 364 in the Open Fleet and immediately attracted attention. More than a few of us, myself included credit Steve with giving us our first Sonar thrill ride. The following year, Ralph and Elaine Hinsch and Kevin and Nancy Collins brought Sonars 408 *Pied Piper Too* and 410 *Rhumb Runner* to the club. A new one-design fleet was beginning to jell at NBC. In '89, Rich Scarpellino brought in hull 447. 476 *BBP BBP*, owned by Howard and Janet Bissinger and Joe Pantalone, joined the fleet the following year. These boats are still sailing in Fleet 23. We soon decided to bite the bullet and be recognized as a separate one-design fleet to get our own start and shoulder the responsibilities of an NBC fleet.

Since the Sonar Class Association prohib-

ited dry sailing, NBC kept all the boats on moorings. A few years later, the Association approved dry sailing, and the racing boats came off the moorings and onto trailers. Nothing like a clean hull when heading out for a day of racing. Weighing in at only 2000 lb., the Sonar is light enough for the crew to push from its dry sail space to the hoist and back. In recent years we have availed ourselves of the club forklift, operated by two qualified fleet members, to accomplish this task.

Steve Mojo remained our "Fleet Captain for Life" until '95. Since then, we have had 12 fleet captains, 21 different Sonars, and about 38 different owners or partners who have made Fleet 23 what it is. A detailed record, by year, of every Sonar hull number, boat name, owner, Fleet Captain, and Fleet Champion is on a Google Doc spreadsheet available to anyone interested. (Contact Fleet Captain [Holly Cullen](#).)



Lobster Boil 2002

By 1999 Fleet 23 had built itself up to 9 boats and hosted our first Class sanctioned regatta at NBC. We dubbed it The Tappan Zee Challenge (TZC). It attracted Sonars from Long Island Sound to as far away as Marblehead, MA. After 38 years, the fleet goes on. The TZC has been held every year



Close competition at TZC

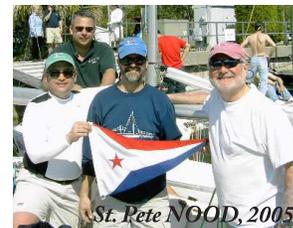
since '99, with only two exceptions. Once for dock construction and again in 2020 because of pandemic restrictions. We are currently planning the 2022 running of the TZC.

As if sailing and racing on the Tappan Zee were



Sonar Worlds, Lunenburg, NS, 2017

not enough fun, Fleet 23 has carried the NBC burgee to racing venues as far afield as the NOOD in St. Petersburg, FL, to the Sonar Worlds in Lunenburg, Nova Scotia, and many places in between.



St. Pete NOOD, 2005

The Sonar was selected as the Paralympic keelboat in '96. The TZC, traditionally held early in the season, attracted several Paralympic teams from as far away as Ireland, training for the upcoming trials. The TZC initially attracted our own Paralympic sailor, Rick Doerr, to NBC. While still a member at Noroton, Rick won the silver medal in the 2016 Paralympics in Rio. Our Association with Paralympic sailors gave us the incentive to use the TZC as a fund-raiser to support special needs sailing for several years. To this day, Fleet 23 hosts a group from Helen Hayes Hospital for an annual Adaptive Sailing Clinic at NBC.



Cruisers provide for adaptive sailor spectators

Fleet 23 remains one of the most active one-design fleets at NBC. Even in the off-year that 2021 was, the fleet averaged 4.8 boats on the line every race. That activity level attracts other NBC one-design racers to join the Sonar fun. The performance of a racing dinghy with the comfort and easy handling of a cruiser is equally attractive to hard-core competitors, family fun racers, and day sailors on our beautiful Tappan



Head to head Sunday Competition

Zee. Since its beginning, I have been a member of the fleet. I can attest that it has been and remains a fleet of great camaraderie and lasting friendships that extend well beyond NBC.