The Tourouts

by Gordon Proctor

IN 1947, SOME OF THE WOULD-BE fun racers whose boats were definitely not racing types, got together and formed a club within QCYC for boats with totally unreasonable handicaps. They called the class Tourouts.

While the word is an ancient one, there are two possible definitions. One ventures that Tourouts were "touring" boats "out" of all the other classes. The other definition, probably closer to being correct, is that the boats were "torn out" of a log – in other words, home-built.

Whatever the true definition, one of the first to organize Tourouts at QCYC was Roly Kirk who built his own 30-ft, gaff-rigged schooner, *Nighthawk*. Roly was the "Front Commodore" of the Tourouts where everything had to be humorously different. His cohort in organizing the class was the brother of May Proctor (and my brother-in-law) Jim Westhead, who sailed *Francie II*, a gaff-rigged, round-hulled Dutch boat he bought in Holland during the war and had shipped to QCYC.

The rating system used was the very simplest possible. The handicap was 80% of the difference between the lead boat and your boat. So if you were 10 minutes behind the lead boat, your handicap was 8 minutes. The handicap was good for the next race only, so if you missed a race, you had no handicap.

Averages for all handicaps were used for the QCYC regatta and for the cruise to PCYC on Labour Day weekend, an annual Tourout event. On Sunday we would race against the PCYC Tourouts and sail back to QCYC on Monday. But it seemed that Labour Day was always a day of gigantic storms and, one year, of dense fog. On Saturday night, QCYC would supply the corn and PCYC the pot, butter, salt and coffee. ABYC later joined the fun with its Tourouts, adding weiners and buns to the PCYC party.

At one time, PCYC gave Tourouts their own start in Wednesday night races. But every time one of the Tourout types got off the ferry and waved to us, we would postpone the start until the last member arrived. This got the Tourouts kicked out of the Wednesday night races, so the Tourouts organized their own regatta on Thursday nights. We'd wait until RCYC finished its races and then go around its buoys the other way!

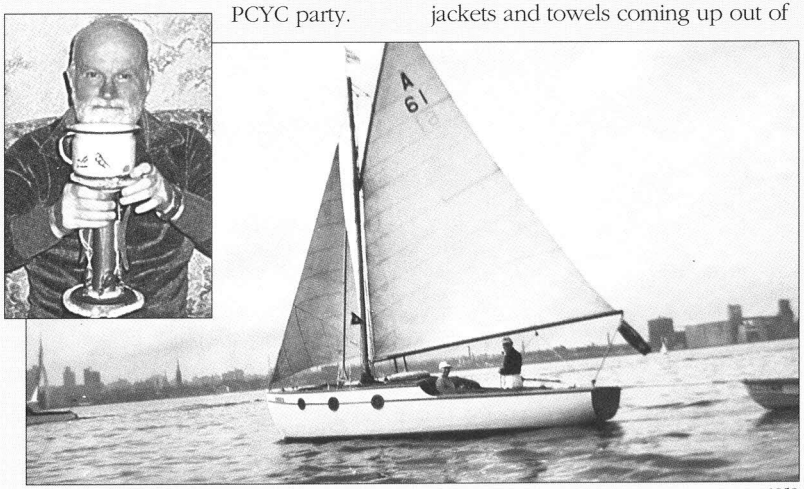
Sail sizes and numbers were not a factor in Tourouts, and I have fond memories of *Nighthawk* sailing along with nobody on deck and yards of ladies' underwear, sleeping bags, life jackets and towels coming up out of the hatch as extra sail area.

Years ago, LYRA allotted "A" numbers to yacht clubs for their miscellaneous non-class boats. QCYC was allotted A60 to A69. Those were the numbers used by the Tourouts.

Since the Tourouts disbanded, former members meet monthly during the winter and go to Muskoka each September for a reunion. Tourouts have their own song, a pennant we all flew (a white skull and crossbones with "Tourouts" in white) and a baby's pot, the prize we sailed for.

Some of the Tourouts from the period 1947–1967 were Graydon Reiper on *Gob*, Gord Rea on *Stardust* and Connie Law on what he called a converted lifeboat (before he bought the ketch from which he fell and drowned in 1957), Jack Ward on *Contrary*, Gil Callingham on *Fran* and later *Maggy*, David Hogg on *Talisman*, John and Kay Walker on *Silver Spar*, Bill Whiteside on *Wendigo* and later *Tahiti*, Norm Grant on *Pelican*, Eric Camplin on *Dooie* and later *Terrick*, Walton and Wilf Martin on *Miss Marilyn* and Scottie Martin on *Wittekat*, a boat still in the club in '89.

Boats have become a lot different from the days of Tourouts, but there was something to be said about the spirit that surrounded that group of misfits.



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Gord Proctor (inset) with Tourout mug; prominent QCYC Tourout Francie II.