

**THE GROSSE POINTE YACHT CLUB CONNECTION TO LARGE ICE  
YACHT RACING**

**The Stuart International Ice Yacht Trophy and the  
Hearst International Challenge Cup**

**By Larry W. Stephenson, M.D.**

On page 39 of the *Grosse Pointer* spring issue for 1947 are photographs of two iceboats. According to the first caption, “Ferdinand the Bull” was owned by GPYC member Rex Jacobs, skippered by George Hendrie and holder of the title of World Champion, having won the Stuart International Ice Yacht Trophy every year since 1941. The second photograph depicts “Deuce IV”, a serious contender for the Stuart Trophy that was owned by GPYC member Clare Jacobs and skippered by Joe Snay.

Since iceboating was such an integral part of the early years of our Club, it seems logical that perhaps we should know something about the sport and those members who embraced it.

**Rex and Clare Jacobs**

Brothers Rex and Clare Jacobs, along with a third brother Fred, founded the F.L. Jacobs Company, a manufacturing company that supplied components for the auto industry and built machines for well-known companies such as Coca Cola. During World War II the company was heavily engaged in military production. First Rex, then Clare served as the company’s President.

All three brothers joined the GPYC as life members right around the time that the Club reopened in 1938. They were all sailors and owned various types of boats over the years. Clare was known to be an exceptional sailor and raced a number of sailboats he owned, the most noted being “Revelry” and “Falcon”. Rex was somewhat limited in his sailing stamina due to chronic shortness of breath. As a soldier in World War I, he had sustained significant lung damage from poisonous gas.

Clare and Rex also owned iceboats. The two iceboats pictured in the 1947 *Grosse Pointer* were large racing iceboats requiring a two-man crew. Clare owned and usually raced on "Deuce IV", while Rex's "Ferdinand the Bull" was skippered by George Hendrie, who was also a co-owner of the boat.

### **George Hendrie**

George Hendrie was a part owner of the Macoid Corporation, a company that manufactured components for the auto industry, and was president of the company for many years. His grandfather, also George Hendrie, was born in Glasgow, Scotland and immigrated to Detroit in 1859 at age 24, where he eventually acquired a number of local streetcar companies as well as some other major businesses. Detroit historian Clarence Burton referred to him as the "Father of Detroit Street Railways". (\*1)

George Hendrie and his brother William joined the GPYC in early 1914 at ages 17 and 19 respectively, making them part of the Club's founding members group. Club records from 1914 point to George as being one of the best iceboat racers in the Club; records from the 1920s indicate that George, along with Joe Snay, were the membership's top iceboat racers in those years. Both served on the Club's Racing Committee. Eventually George became a part of the iceboating group who dropped their Club memberships in the years 1929-30 and did not return when the Club reopened in 1938. (See chapter 2, p. ? for more discussion of this subject.)

In a recent interview, his son George Hendrie, Jr., now 86, suggested a possible reason for the iceboaters not returning to the Club. In the same year the GPYC reopened, 1938, the Detroit Ice Yacht Club (DIYC) was formed specifically for iceboat racers. The group organized races for all the different categories of iceboats on Lake St. Clair. George Jr. also recalled that by 1938 the epicenter of iceboating on the lake had shifted from the Grosse Pointes to an area further north in L'Anse Creuse Bay, just south of what is now Lake St. Clair Metropark. Iceboaters found that the ice routinely formed earlier and stayed later in this location than in the area of the Pointes. George Jr. was himself an avid iceboat racer and at one point served as Commodore of the DIYC.

## **Joseph W. Snay**

Joe Snay was considered an outstanding sailor and iceboat racer in his day. When a win was important to a sailboat owner, Joe was often hired on as crew. It is not known exactly when he joined the GPYC, but Club records show that he served on the Racing Committee during the 1920s and that he was among the group of iceboaters who left the Club in 1929-30 and did not return.

Joe owned a tavern on the northeast corner of Mack Avenue and Manor Street, which was a popular place for sailors and iceboaters to meet, share a drink or two and play tabletop shuffleboard. For many years, Joe was a Trustee for the Village of Grosse Pointe Farms. He ran twice, unsuccessfully, for Village President.

The building that housed his establishment still stands today as the showroom and offices of Stefek's Auctioneers and Appraisers.

## **The Stuart International Ice Yacht Trophy and the Hearst International Challenge Cup**

In 1903, F. A. Stuart, owner of a pharmaceutical company in Marshall, Michigan, donated a trophy for an international competition in iceboat racing that was planned for the early winter months of that year. (\*2) The Kalamazoo Ice Yacht Club (now Gull Lake Ice Yacht Club) was charged with organizing the competition and setting the rules. Ice yacht clubs from the U. S. and Canada were notified of the competition, which was to take place on nearby Gull Lake. Unfortunately, the weather that winter was so unfavorable it forced the postponement of the event to the following year. (\*2)

Back in those days, iceboats and steam locomotives were recognized as the fastest man-piloted objects on earth. It was claimed that iceboats had exceeded speeds of 100 mph, which generated a great deal of public interest and excitement. Newspaper and magazine coverage of iceboat racing was extensive. (\*2) Probably for that very reason, newspaper

publisher and U.S. Congressman William Randolph Hearst sent a telegram to the Commodore of the KIYC, offering to donate a second trophy for the 1904 event. (\*2) The trophy was to be named the Hearst International Challenge Cup and the KIYC was given the option to define the series of races for the Cup competition.

The inaugural race finally took place in 1904. Ice yacht clubs from Michigan, Wisconsin, Illinois, Ohio, the East Coast and Canada were invited to compete. The Stuart Trophy competition included boats with a sail area greater than 450 square feet; those with 450 square feet or less would compete for the Hearst Cup. Separate events were held for each award competition. Two buoys were set two miles apart and boats were required to round each buoy five times for a total of twenty miles per race, the winner being the first to win three out of five races.

“Wolverine” from the KIYC was the first winner of the Stuart trophy. Theoretically, the greater the sail area, the faster the boat; “Wolverine” had a sail area of 800 square feet and was said to be the second largest ice racing yacht in the world. The *Kalamazoo Morning Gazette* for Sunday, March 4, 1904, claimed that it set world speed records in each of the five laps of the final race for the trophy. The Hearst Cup was won by “Hilo”, also from the KIYC.

The first of these two trophies to be won by a Detroit area challenger was the Hearst Cup. In March of 1928, Joseph B. Lodge from the GPYC took the Cup in “Deuce II”. Lodge was said to be a relative of Detroit mayor John Lodge and had joined the GPYC in 1926. In 1938, Joseph Lodge was also the first Detroit area winner of the Stuart Trophy, this time with “Deuce III”, but in that race he represented the newly formed Detroit Ice Yacht Club.

By the 1940s the Stuart Trophy was arguably the most highly coveted trophy in iceboat racing. (\*3) At this point in time competitors were mainly from ice yacht clubs in Michigan and Wisconsin, and challenges were issued by the clubs rather than by individuals, so in any given race there could be multiple boats racing from each club.

In 1940, the DIYC put up two boats to challenge the Northwest Ice Yacht Club in Oshkosh, Wisconsin, for the Stuart Trophy. The race was held on

Green Bay, near Menominee, Michigan. The first boat was “Deuce III”, the 1938 winner that was now owned by James Ford and skippered by Wally Hoch, a 1914 founding member of the GPYC. The second boat was “Ferdinand the Bull”, co-owned by Rex Jacobs and George Hendrie and skippered by George, with Clare Jacobs trimming the sails. The NIYC was represented by “Blue Bill II” and “Debutante III”, the latter having won the Stuart Trophy in 1920 and 1939. “Ferdinand the Bull” was victorious and the Stuart Trophy came back to the DIYC. (\*4)

### **“Deuce IV” and “The Bull”**

At some point in the late 1930s or early 1940s, Clare Jacobs acquired “Deuce IV”, a serious racing competitor to “The Bull”. Both of these boats had been built in Harrison Township, Michigan, by the Vanderbush brothers. Their woodworking shop was just a few hundred yards from where iceboaters had been launching on Lake St. Clair in the 1930s, near the intersection of East Jefferson Avenue and Crocker Boulevard.

Following their 1940 win, Jacobs and Hendrie successfully defended the Stuart Trophy with “The Bull” from 1941 through 1947. (\*5) George Hendrie’s son, George, Jr., raced with his father as sail trimmer in the 1943 race, again held on Green Bay near Menominee, and remembered the excitement of winning the first three of their five races to take the trophy. He raced again with his father in 1944 on Lake St. Clair, winning this time in the fifth race. In both races the challenging boats were from the NIYC in Oshkosh, “Debutante III” and “The Flying Dutchman”.

George, Jr., also recalled attending the 1947 race on Lake Winnebago near Oshkosh, and remembered that there were light winds on the day of the final race. “Deuce IV” was racing in the series and was favored to win in light wind conditions, but it broke down before the final race. (\*6) George subsequently watched his father steer “The Bull” to victory himself that day, competing as both skipper and sail trimmer in order to save the weight and be more competitive. In 1949, George Hendrie skippered “The Deuce” on Lake Winnebago and once again took the trophy by beating “The Flying Dutchman”, skippered by Charles Nevitt, and “Debutante III”, skippered by John Buckstaff, who came in 2<sup>nd</sup> and

third, respectively. (\*7) It is unclear if Stuart Trophy regattas were held in either 1948 or 1950.

According to Bill Bentsen, 83, a winner of both the Stuart Trophy and Hearst Cup and an Olympic sailing Gold Medal recipient, the rules for the Stuart Trophy challenge changed in the 1950s. Ice yacht clubs at that time were either unable or unwilling to challenge, so the challenging process reverted to individual challenges between iceboat owners. (\*8) There was also a change to the qualifications for Hearst Cup competition, in that the same boat could now compete for both awards, even though the races themselves remained separate.

On February 24, 1951, the DIYC finally relinquished the Stuart Trophy when George Hendrie, piloting “The Bull” on Lake St. Clair, lost the final race by a minute and a half to “Mary B”, which completed the race in 44 minutes. “Mary B” was a relatively new boat built in 1948, representing the Four Lakes Yacht Club of Madison, Wisconsin. The skipper, Carl Bernard, had already won the Hearst Cup and Stuart Trophy in other iceboats, and took the Hearst Cup the previous year with “Mary B”. A news article that covered the race stated that “Ferdinand the Bull” had held the Stuart Trophy for 11 years. (\*9)

Around 1960, “The Bull” and “The Deuce” were sold to iceboaters in Wisconsin. “Ferdinand the Bull” was sold to Harry “Buddy” Melges, Jr., of Zenda, Wisconsin, close to Lake Geneva in the southern part of the state. Buddy, now 83, is considered one of the most successful competition sailors in history, winning dozens of national and international championships. He was the helmsman in America’s successful defense of the America’s Cup in 1992 and took both gold and bronze medals in Olympic sailing competition. (\*10)

Buddy made some changes to “The Bull’s” rigging, recut the sails and later added carbon fiber sails. (\*11) Racing “The Bull”, Buddy won the Hearst Cup in 1961-65, 1971, 1980 and 2001. He won the Stuart Trophy with “The Bull” in 1965, 1968, 1975, 1980 and 2001.

“Deuce IV” currently holds both the Hearst Cup and the Stuart Trophy. “The Deuce” is 54 feet long with a 52-foot mast and a sail area of 840 feet, making her the largest iceboat still being raced competitively. She

is now owned by Rick Henning of Racine, Wisconsin, and was recently clocked by GPS at 119 mph. (\*12) Both "The Deuce" and "The Bull" race out of the Skeeter Ice Boat Club in Lake Geneva, Wisconsin.

Over these many years the Grosse Pointe Yacht Club has moved far from its iceboating roots 100 years ago. But isn't it nice to know that some of that past still races on the frozen lakes of Wisconsin, waiting for the next challenge to be issued for the Hearst Cup or the Stuart Trophy. Perhaps one day we might even see "Ferdinand the Bull" or "Deuce IV" back on their home ice, here on Lake St. Clair!

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