

Cottonwood fun exceeds wildest expectations! the Cottonwood as experienced by Uncle Al

The Wayfarer has landed - with a splash - at the Cottonwood Regatta held April 26-27 near Charlotte, North Carolina. Added this year to what had been a two-fleet regatta held annually by the Catawba YC on Lake Wylie just SW of Charlotte, the Wayfarer immediately became a full-fledged partner in the festivities with 11 entries alongside of 8 Vanguard 15's and 9 Lightnings.

The Cottonwood provided everything a sailor could want: not merely good competitive racing and summer-like weather, but also great hospitality, magnificent food and free beer plus an absolutely marvellous bluegrass band for Saturday entertainment. The whole thing was definitely worth the 1000+ km. drive that 8 of the 11 W's enjoyed to get there.

Much of the credit for luring so many W's so far from home - an amazing feat in these times - has to go to the two local Wayfarers: Richard Johnson and Jim Higgins. Most of us had met these two at the Midwinters and their friendly enthusiasm was definitely infectious (if that term is still politically correct in this time of SARS...) Could we do anything less than enjoy another weekend of racing with our Carolina Wayfarers?

Our attendance supplied the answer to that one: Wayfarers came out from Montreal (Peter and Alex Rahn), Ottawa (Frank Goulay and Lucy), Lake Eustis in Florida (Mike and Dotty Murto), Michigan (Bob Frick with Peter Every, Hubert and Phyllis Dauch, Judd Lather with Cecilia Potts) as well as the Toronto area (Hans and Mudl Gottschling, Alan Hallwood, Al Schönborn with John Weakley). We even unearthed Windsor's Aaron Law who has been doing graduate work at the University of North Carolina, and who brought along his lovely wife, Dionne, and their lively 18-month-old daughter, Mary.

By the end of the regatta, all of us had enjoyed ourselves so much that we promised to return in 2004 with more Wayfarers. This prompted regatta organizer, Bill Wiggins, to groan theatrically and cry out: "You mean there's more??!!" When pressed, Bill hazarded April 24-25 as a guess for next year's Cottonwood dates. Of course, this is only a guess but it's never too early to make sure that space for the 2004 Cottonwood is ensured on our calendars! And now, more details about this year's Cottonwood:

Quick Chick fails to outrun its Shadow as Rahns win Wayfarers on a tie-breaker!

Peter Rahn and his son, Alex, survived some scary moments on the trip from Montreal to Charlotte and went on to win the first Cottonwood Wayfarer title in a close come-back victory over Al Schönborn and John Weakley in a 7-race series. Peter and Alex almost lost their lovely wood Wayfarer Shadow (not to mention their lives!) when an axle weld on their trailer gave way on the Interstate near Harrisburg, PA. The Rahns experienced first-hand, the amount of helm that can be created by a trailer axle that has pivoted 45° as the car-trailer combo tried to jack-knife. But Peter's cool reactions at the helm got them off the road and stopped safely without damage to W286 and their car. The trailer needed a new axle and wheels which were managed in time to get Peter and Alex into their billet at Richard and Michele's lovely home in Charlotte only about six hours late on Thursday evening.

After getting off to a relatively slow start with a 4th in the first race, Peter and Alex cranked it up a notch, and by the end of Saturday's 4 light-air races, were virtually tied for the series lead with Uncle Al and John Weakley who were sailing El Pollito Rápido (Spanish for Quick Chick). Sunday brought glorious sunshine and perfect sailing winds of 8 to 10 knots, more typical of the April sailing conditions on Lake Wylie, we were told. By handily winning the first of three Sunday races squeezed in by our speedy Race Committee "before noon", the Quick Chick appeared to be losing its Shadow, but Peter and Alex rose to the challenge and beat Al and John in each of the final two races to create a series tie at 10 points. With three firsts to Uncle Al's two, Peter and Alex won the tie-breaker and scored a well-earned series win. Congratulations on a super series, guys!!!

John and Al, meanwhile, were pleased with the performance of their borrowed W3627 which Richard Johnson had bought up north to bolster to Catawba YC Wayfarer Fleet. Al had volunteered to rig the new addition for racing and sail it in the Cottonwood instead of SHADES, and the result for El Pollito Rápido was a very competitive series second.

Third place went to Hans Gottschling and Wayfarer Man, Frank Goulay, who sailed a very consistent series in The Nutshell. Frank and Hans rounded off an outstanding 3-3-3-3-2-3 series with an exciting comeback victory over Peter and Alex in the finale.

A mere two points separated series 4th from series 6th, and when the dust had settled, it was our very gracious hosts, Richard Johnson and his wife, Michele Parish, who took 4th place in Free Range Chickin a point ahead of Aaron Law with Charlie Runkle in Old Leakwood, one of five wooden W's in the series! Aaron and Charlie were one of three boats to beat their seed by one position and could have laid claim to one of the green Most Improved flags, had Uncle Al not screwed up on Sunday's post-race calculations and mistakenly declared the wrong Most Improved winners. My apologies - it must have been the free beer or perhaps that Uncle Al was not used to so much sun and warmth in April!!

Michiganders (Michigeezers?), Bob Frick and Peter Every, sailed extremely well, especially considering their crew age total of over 150 years!! Despite a DNF in race 2 and a "senior moment" in race 6 where they were DSQ'd for crossing the forbidden start-finish line during the race, Peter and Bob ended up only one point behind Aaron Law in 6th overall. Bob and Peter's series highlight came early as they trounced the fleet with a magnificent runaway victory in the first race! Well done, guys!

Topping the three single-handers in the series was Walled Lake, Michigan's 76-year-old Hubert Dauch, who a year ago was at death's door following a botched surgery. Hubie ended up in series 7th with a fairly consistent series that was highlighted by a nice 4th in the third race. Hubert was also one of our three Most Improved. Congratulations, Hubert!! Pretty amazing how the Wayfarer manages to successfully vaccinate so many of us against severe acute geezerishness!!

Sailing Nick Seraphinoff's wooden beauty, Allies, were Judd Lather and Cecilia Potts who usually sail a Lightning and the J-22, Porcine Accoutrements in Michigan. Judd has been our excellent Race Officer in our past two Wayfarer regattas at Tawas, but decided to join us on the race course this time. Their series 8th was

deceptive since they only finished 4 of the 7 races - races in which they were most competitive. Cecilia and Judd were further hobbled by the fact that nasty Nick had forbidden them to use his #1 racing sails, the Mike McNamara specials!!

A disappointing series for Catawba's Jim Higgins as he and new crew, Alex Roussel, could manage no better than series 9th, and only one race finish as high as 7th. When one has a disappointing race weekend like that, the regatta becomes less fun - unless there is free beer, fun competitors, great food and fine entertainment - all of which the Cottonwood fortunately provided, and I for one, never saw Jim that he wasn't smiling and looking like he was enjoying the weekend.

Following Jim were a pair of single-handers, Mike Murto and Alan Hallwood. Mike and his wife, Dotty, came all the way up from Lake Eustis, Florida, the home of our Wayfarer Midwinters, and managed an extended stay at the Cottonwood when unusually heavy rains left his camper trailer embedded deeper than a journalist. Being retired, Mike and Dotty don't let this kind of thing bother them, however, and they were easily on their way back home on Monday instead of Sunday.

Alan Hallwood is a keen new Wayfarer from the Mississauga SC who bought Tom Wharton's "other" wooden Wayfarer less than a month ago with a view to participating in the 2004 Worlds. When his intended crew had to cancel out, Alan was not deterred and drove the entire lengthy trip of over 1300 km. alone! Now that is true Wayfarer spirit. Welcome to Wayfarers, Alan!!

Notes: The Cottonwood is not a good occasion to lose weight. We were extremely well fed throughout the weekend with delicious meals and desserts of every description.

And then there were The Gumbranch Partners, a wonderfully authentic bluegrass band that entertained us Saturday afternoon and evening. Unfortunately, we only got to hear their afternoon performance which wafted out to the race course where we were completing our "drifter" of the series. But after supper, we got to be there for the second performance which we all enjoyed. Uncle Al even bought all three of their tapes which we enjoyed throughout our 12-hour drive home during Sunday night and Monday morning.

Special Uncle Al thanks to:

Dotty and Mike Murto who had been our Midwinters hosts and brought us a bunch of stuff that Marc and I had forgotten after the Midwinters, and who also delivered a beautiful Lake Eustis SC burgee to mark Uncle Al's induction as an Honorary Member of the LESC Richard Johnson, wife Michele and daughters, Alyssa and Emily who made John and me as well as Peter and Alex a part of their happy family and lovely home for the Cottonwood Alyssa for giving our Wayfarer a fine name and logo in time for the races Emily for being lots of cheerful fun all weekend Richard and Michele for supplying the entire regatta with free beer - the delicious Carolina Blonde and Low Down Brown which was not allowed to run out all weekend long! the whole Catawba YC for making all of us visitors feel so welcome and at home See you next year!!

Cottonwood Regatta Report



The Cottonwood in Review by Richard Johnson W10139 (above)

It was Jim Higgins' idea to have the Wayfarer class piggyback on the Cottonwood Regatta, and it was genius. I have to admit that I had my doubts, but once we got the OK from the Catawba Yacht Club, and the Canadian and US Wayfarer organizations got the information posted, it was a force unto its own. We had 13 boats commit and in the end, 11 showed up to race. We had participants from as far as Florida and Ottawa. Most everyone arrived on Friday, a chilly rainy day. I quickly broke out the beer (Al's note: and most welcome it was, too!!) By late in the afternoon, after a short sail, and a few more beers, everyone was feeling pretty comfortable. We dined on burgers and dogs, chewed the fat and relaxed. The scene was more reunion than regatta.

The conditions on Saturday were odd. There were thunderheads in every direction, yet little wind. At 11:30, we all left the docks, and ghosted to the start. By 12:00 the race committee had taken their best guess on wind direction and we started. I'm not the best race chronicler since I tend to remember very little from any race. But after the finish, it was suggested we head to the docks due to storm warnings. On reaching the dock, I heard that Bob Frick had finished first. In a tone of resignation, I was informed that Bob is a kind of "Light Air Wizard".

At about 1:00, the imminent danger had passed, and we headed back to the course. The conditions were excruciating, the winds were light and variable, the bass boats abundant. Uncle Al and John Weakley took the second race in the borrowed Quick Chick, followed by the Rahns. Al and John had agreed to bring the boat down for me with the caveat that they could rig it for racing. Racing and winning with an unknown boat requires an understanding and knowledge of the boat that few of us will ever achieve.

The Rahns reversed the order of finish in the third race, which distinguished itself as the only race of the day with real wind. We'd been waiting for a front, and midway through the race, the wind shifted to the northwest, with some real strength. Boats that had been pasted to the water were off and planing. Alex and Pete took full advantage of the windfall and consolidated their position. The Rahns are a text book duo when it comes to execution. Roll tacks, spinnaker sets, and jibes completed quickly and quietly. The perfect team. In the end it was their execution that made all the difference.

The fourth race was a test of mental toughness. It was late in the day, and the winds were light and capricious to put it nicely. The Vanguards abandoned the race. The Lightning class had 4 DNF's and the Wayfarers two. The Wayfarers split into two fleets, and Michele and I were lucky enough to lead the second. We would get ahead a little and the pack would reel us in. Finally, on the second leg, Hubert Dauch and Bob Frick passed us just before the mark. But after rounding, both landed in their own private Lake Wylie high, completely parked. Michele and I decided conditions weren't dire enough, so we drifted into the leeward mark. We completed our expletive laden 360 and set our sights on Bob and Hubert, who were still stuck. It may have been furious concentration or psychokinetics but we closed the gap with Bob and Hubert. The wind did another 180 to the northwest, and for once, and by pure luck, we were in the right place. Alan Hallwood snuck in close behind us in his lovely just purchased W442.

By this time it was after 6:00, the band was playing, and I was a little concerned about going back to the docks. I'd promised sunny southern weather and topical breezes. I gingerly sidled over to where Hans, Al, Frank, and John, were sitting on the dock gazebo, and expressed my utter dismay with the conditions. Frank looked, up and said, "Yeah, well it's like this in Canada, too." I was amazed they had just driven 14 hours and about 1000 miles for less than stunning weather and seemed perfectly content. I gave my wife the car keys and went and got another beer.

Sunday morning could not have been more perfect. The wind was from the northwest, and was building. The first race was a single round sprint, which John and Al picked off. The Rahns captured the second race, twice around, with a very solid performance. Hans Gottschling and Frank Goulay, who had turned consistently excellent races, won the final race, which was particularly satisfying to see. All the while, Aaron Law was turning in very consistent finishes, and it was blindingly obvious that by the 7th race, he was just hitting his stride. Aaron was racing with a pickup crew, and due to his schedule at UNC Chapel Hill, he'd not been sailing for a year. Given a few more races he would have been at the front. In the end it was the Rahns in Shadow to win, Al and John in the Quick Chick to place, and Hans and Frank in The Nutshell to show.

Just a quick aside on a few items. I'd like to express my admiration for Hubert Dauch. It never failed, just when I thought I was getting ahead, there was Hubert right behind me. Just when I thought I had clear air, there was Hubert to windward. Sailing alone, he always looked very placid and calm, and yet he was always in the right place. I look forward to the day I can be sailing as well. Judd and Cecilia kindly came down from Tawas, Michigan again - with a Wayfarer instead of the J22. They had never sailed a W before, but wanted to come down, knowing they wouldn't see the rain they saw last fall. They were partially correct. They sailed a good series but had to pack up early on Sunday for the long drive back. Finally, I can't imagine a W regatta

without Mike and Dottie Murto. They're wonderful folks and we look forward to seeing them again next winter.

Michele and I can't remember a weekend we have enjoyed as much, but it was just too short. My eldest daughter wanted the Canadians to stay longer and didn't want them to leave. I think we all felt that way. If only we could have had just a few more hours on Saturday afternoon to enjoy the warm sunlight, and laugh off the day's racing. A number of members of the Catawba Yacht club were impressed with the W fleet, because we raced hard and well, but at the end of the day it was camaraderie and cold beer that counted most. No rock stars, no bitter rivalries. The Cottonwood 2004 is on the Calendar. All I can say is Y'all come!

The Cottonwood Regatta * Catawba YC, Charlotte, NC * April 26-27, 2003

W	Helm/Crew	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6	#7	Pts	PS	SD
286	Peter & Alex Rahn	4	2	1	1	3	1	2	10	1	2*
3627	Al Schönborn/John Weakley	2	1	2	2	1	2	3	10	2	1
938	Hans Gottschling/Frank Goulay	3	3	3	3	2	3	1	15	3	3
10139	Richard Johnson/Michele Parish	7	4	7	4	6	4	7	32	4	4
1044	Aaron Law/Charlie Runkle	5	5	8	NF	5	5	5	33	5	6*
3975	Bob Frick/Peter Every	1	NF	6	7	4	DQ	4	34	6	5
3636	Hubert Dauch (solo)	8	NF	4	6	10	6	6	40	7	8*
864	Judd Lather/Cecilia Potts	6	NF	5	NF	7	7	NC	49	8	-
10302	Jim Higgins/Alex Roussel	10	7	9	8	8	8	9	49	9	7
2959	Mike Murto (solo)	9	6	10	9	9	9	8	50	10	9
442	Alan Hallwood (solo)	11	8	DQ	5	11	NS	NC	59	11	-

* denotes *Most Improved*