

# HISTORY OF THE BEAVER LAKE SAILING CLUB

## The White River Runs Through It

By Tom Jones

By all accounts the White River has always been a beautiful river, home to big catfish and lined with walnut and cherry trees. Native Americans, and later homesteaders, lived along its banks enjoying the limestone bluffs, the forested hills and the verdant valleys. In the midst of this beauty, however, there was a frightful downside. For all its natural beauty, the river could turn deadly on occasion. Flooding that endangered property, homesteaders, Native Americans and livestock seems always to have been a recurring threat.

As early as 1911, the possibility of building a dam on the upper portion of the White River had been considered. Although nothing was done at the time, federal, state and local governments, being slow to act, the notion of damming the river remained a topic for consideration. Finally, a series of floods in the 1920s and 1930s, especially the Great Flood of 1927, which devastated six southern states, including Arkansas, led Congress and the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers to reconsider the earlier flood control projects. In time, the White River Basin was one of those areas recommended for development. In 1929, the Army Corps of Engineers began a flood-study of the area. And so began the arduous process to secure the authority, the expertise, and the funds to build a series of reservoirs along the White River.

The area of the country we are talking about is substantial. The Missouri Department of Conservation provides the best description of the White River Basin, explaining that the area "... originates in northwest Arkansas (AR), southeast of Fayetteville, in the Boston Mountains. Three forks, the White River, the Middle Fork, and the West Fork, come together in Washington County, AR, to form the main stem of the White River. The White River is first impounded as Lake Sequoyah, a 500-acre impoundment at the junction of the Middle Fork and the White River, near Fayetteville. The White River flows south out of Lake Sequoyah and joins the West Fork before entering Beaver Lake just west of Eureka Springs, AR. The White flows out of Beaver Dam, the first in a series of four hydroelectric dams, northward into Missouri (MO) near the town of Eagle Rock in Barry County. The White then flows eastward where it has been impounded as Table Rock Lake, just below its confluence with the James River near Branson. The White River below Table Rock Lake is again impounded by Powersite Dam near Forsyth, MO, and forms Lake Tanneycomo. The river then takes a southern turn and flows back into Arkansas where it has again been impounded by Bull Shoals Dam near Cotter in Marion County. The White River flows southeast out of Bull Shoals Dam and exits the Ozark Plateau into the Mississippi Alluvial Plain near Newport, AR. The White River flows in an almost due south direction from where it enters the delta until its confluence with the Mississippi River near Montgomery Point, AR, some 720 miles from its origin."

Ever slow to act, it took additional flooding in 1937 to get Congress to approve a national flood-control plan. The following year Congress passed the Flood Control Act which authorized the Corps to

build six flood-control lakes in the White River Basin. Two years later Congress passed the Flood Control Act that authorized the building of Norfolk and Bull Shoals Dams. Nearly a decade later, the Beaver Dam Association incorporated, and in 1954 the Flood Control Act authorizing the addition of Beaver Lake for flood control and power generation was added to the White River Plan. In 1957, the Beaver Water District was incorporated. In 1959 the Corps completed its first land purchase. And finally in 1960 construction began on Beaver Dam.

In my lifetime I have lived in Arkansas (or more precisely Northwest Arkansas, which, as those who live here know, is a unique and special part of the state) on five separate occasions, the first being in 1952 when I lived in Decatur for almost a year. The second time I lived in Arkansas was in 1955 when I was a sophomore in high school. My father bought a farm outside of Elkins. Our farm was bordered by Highway 16 on one side and the White River on the other.

Thus began my connection with the river that would become a lake and give rise to our sailing club. Living on a farm that backed up to the White River was a high point of my youth. Every day after school, like a modern day Huckleberry Finn, I headed to the river to fish. And the fish, of course, were plentiful on that river that seems always to have been here. There was that unpredictable downside of course. The White River, as it had done since time began, as wild and capricious as ever, flooded again and again. Of course that was 1955 and everything was about to change. A mere five years later construction would begin on Beaver Dam.

### **The Beaver Lake Sailing Club, Origin and History**

By Tom Jones and James E. Dunn



Photo 1. Tom Jones, Amy Jones (Tom's daughter), and Jim Dunn, *Fun's* crew in 2012.

A history of the Beaver Lake Sailing Club starts earlier than the date of its incorporation in 1979. It encompasses 14 previous years of sailing and racing on Beaver Lake and nearby lakes by its founding members, which even then were loosely organized as a sailing club and also known as the Beaver Lake Sailing Club. The history of the BLSC is the story of the many dedicated, versatile and sometimes daring people in it, past and present.

Four days before their wedding on July 15, 1964, Rae and Jim Dunn's new International Moth class sailboat arrived by truck from Florida. They car-topped it to Lake Fort Smith, paddled it out to the middle before hoisting the cat-rigged sail, and learned to sail: tiller in one hand and paperback guide in the other. Some others may know this book which contains a photo with the famous caption "Houndog tacks. Who has the tiller?" Rae had a fiery sunburn for her wedding day (and Jim had an irritated mother-in-law). They packed the Moth back on the car after the wedding and drove to the Sandhill Lake District in northwestern Nebraska for their camping/sailing honeymoon (Photo 2). After returning to Fayetteville, they spent many weekends that fall sailing on Lake Tenkiller.

After a late fall capsizing proved the non-buoyancy of the Moth, they decided more safety was essential and some extra leg and head room under the boom would be a bonus. Looking for a local builder, they gave some consideration to Loftland Sailcraft in Wichita, builder of both the Snipe and Flying Scot. However, the Snipe's non-planning hull lines and heavy steel daggerboard were strong deterrents. Dave Durst, chairman of the University of Arkansas Art Department, owned a Loftland Snipe, regularly moored on Lake Fayetteville.

The Scot was more than they wanted to trailer, but an alternative became available when they learned that Dr. Morris Henry in Fayetteville owned a Flying Dutchman (FD) made by the Advance Sailboat Company in Independence, Missouri. Advance had an interesting production plant: A huge hollowed out limestone cavern gave fantastic humidity and temperature control, but the epoxy fumes were mind-numbing in spite of ventilation fans. Contact with the company proved that they made a 13' 3" International FJ, the 20' International FD, and a 15' 3" Demon class of their own design with planning hull, a scaled down FD sail plan, and with optional spinnaker and trapeze. They decided on the latter and took delivery on sail number #157 in March, 1965. Beaver Lake had then only started to fill. They followed a graveled fisherman's track through the brush and trees of the White River canyon and launched within sight of the dam. The area of water impounded was possibly 6 – 10 times that of present Lake Fayetteville. Perhaps they can legitimately claim to have hoisted the first sail on Beaver Lake. Because Rae was expecting, Jim single-handed it that day (Photo 3).

By mid-summer of 1965, water had accumulated enough to be able to sail at Prairie Creek, though ramp-launching was congested by all the new trihedral-hull power boats with huge Evinrude motors. That there wasn't much water upstream is evidenced by a picture taken of the Highway 12 bridge (Photo 4).



Photo 2. BLSC founder Rae Dunn on her honeymoon with Moth (and Jim), Big Alkali Lake, Sandhills, NE, July, 1964.



Photo 3. Jim Dunn's first sail on Beaver Lake, March, 1965.



Photo 4. Highway 12 bridge as Beaver Lake filled in 1965.

University faculty had begun to build summer cabins along the west shore of the LaRue Peninsula, and acquire sailboats. Among these were Paige Mulhollan (Skylark), Gordon McNeil (FJ) who had learned sailing while visiting Tulane, Sam Siegel (Demon), Max Milam (Demon), Jim Scroggs (Lone Star 16), and John Imhoff (Bluejay). Rae and Jim chased down Fred Crosett, Barbara Havens stepfather,

trailing a Lido-14 to Hickory Creek. Fred had taught sailing at the Naval Academy in Annapolis. Dave and June Pelphrey had bought a South Coast 21, newly designed in 1965 by marine architect Carl Alberg, and moored at Rocky Branch. Kenner Boats, longtime fishing boat builder in Knoxville, Arkansas, was the builder, operating under franchise from South Coast Seacraft in Shreveport

Jim Dunn called a meeting of the aforementioned sailors during the winter of 1965-1966 and proposed that they form a sailing club for the purpose of racing and sharing interests, and to be known as the Beaver Lake Sailing Club. He promptly was elected commodore. Dues were \$10 per year to cover the costs of a newsletter and other incidentals. It was natural to initiate racing on the Coppermine side of the LaRue peninsula. For those that trailered in, they launched their boats using a gravel road just west of the old LaRue store/post office. It was (still is) steep, long and awkward. Gordon McNeil submerged his station wagon when his brakes failed. Racing was regular during the summer of 1966 with races started by waving flags off the Mulhollan's shoreline. Mary Bess and Paige Mulhollan's property is adjacent to the launch road.

The first regatta advertised as such on Beaver Lake was held on Labor Day, 1966, at Prairie Creek, and sponsored by the Rogers Chamber of Commerce. Ed Buckle sailed his FD to first place in the only race that day, a comparatively short one, and was awarded the winning trophy by gubernatorial candidate Winthrop Rockefeller, who subsequently was elected Arkansas' governor that fall. Ed's grandfather helped bring one of Sir Thomas Lipton's Shamrocks across the Atlantic to race at Newport in the America Cup. Dave Durst brought his Snipe from Lake Fayetteville to race. June and Dave Pelphrey started to Prairie Creek from Rocky Branch the previous afternoon, got caught in a severe late afternoon thunderstorm, and spent more than an hour in the water holding their SC-21 off the rocky shore somewhere near the tip of the LaRue Peninsula.

In the course of the summer, the Club recognized the potential advantage of having a floating dock for loading and unloading people, picnic baskets, etc. They took up a collection and that winter built a 10 x 14 dock which was located on the shore of the Mulholland's property. Initially it had been considered locating it on the east side of the LaRue peninsula (Photo 5), but members soon concluded that this area was too exposed and the slope too gradual for dock placement. Pictured left to right are Ed Clement, Dave Gosnell, and Paige Mulhollan with one of his sons. Gosnell, a mechanical engineer working for Baldwin piano, forged brackets for the hold-off poles in Baldwin's workshop .

After a year sailing off the Mulhollan's property, the members thought perhaps their generosity and certainly their right to privacy were being abused. It also was realized that an increasing number of sailboats were being moored at the Rocky Branch Marina. Hence in 1967, the Club made the obvious move to Rocky Branch. This worked very well for several years. Centerboard boats were launched along the beach at the public use area (Photo 6). Boats from left to right correspond to Jim Dunn, Bill Guest, Charles Richardson, Wes Eckels, and Cecil England.



Photo 5. Scouting for a Club location on the LaRue peninsula.



Photo 6. BLSC race day. Launching off the beach at the Rocky Branch public use area.

Note that every boat is pulled up on a used tire carcass to prevent scratches. Everyone carried one everywhere he went. It paid to cut sections out of the sidewalls to drain the water when recovered. The public use area was used for Club potlucks after racing. The marina owner even allowed the Club to move its dock to the west side of the long finger of land which protects the marina from the northwest. History professor Gordon McNeil sponsored a University of Arkansas student sailing club. They acquired three used FJ's from the Fort Smith SC and Gordon gave lessons using the Club dock.

The Club added many new members after its move to Rocky Branch including Bobbie and Bob Ellis (Gulf Coast 18 & Catalina 22), August Van Pouche, Tom Jones (FJ), Barbara and Jerry Havens (Tanzer 22 & 26), Marcia and John McCain (Sweet-16), Janet and Charles Richardson (FJ), Bill Guest (Demon), and Kara and David Gosnell who bought the Pelphrey's SC-21 after the Pelpheys moved up to a Kenner-built Privateer-26 ketch (Photos 7 & 8).



Photo 7. June and Dave Pelphrey's Kenner-built 26 foot Privateer ketch near Rocky Branch.

BLSC raced regularly, centerboards and keelboats combined, using the Portsmouth Yardstick for time corrections. In 1967 BLSC scheduled a Commodore's Cup distance race. Rae and Jim Dunn won the first place, silver Revere bowl sailing Demon #157. They promptly deeded it back to BLSC as a perpetual trophy to be awarded annually to the winner of a match race between spring and fall series winners. It now is on permanent display in the Charlton House.



Photo 8. Dave Pelphrey (center) receiving first place trophy in the Cruising Class at Rocky Branch.

The Club still waved flags and blew horns from the beach in order to start and finish races. For a time David Gosnell loaned BLSC the use of his home-built “party-barge”, a 20-foot pontoon boat built with oil drums and with an old 35 hp Johnson motor, to serve as the race committee boat. But enough of us were traveling to races and visiting facilities at other clubs to know that we owed it to our members and our own self-respect to do better. So again, the Club took up a collection and bought a used party barge to use as a race committee boat, shown tied to our dock at Rocky Branch (Photo 9). Bill Guest is on the walkway. Note the 10-gauge starting cannon to the right on the dock.

The RC boat opened up a new phase for BLSC. In 1969 BLSC hosted an invitational FJ/Demon/handicap cruising class regatta (Photos 10 -12).



Photo 9. BLSC race committee boat and dock at the Rocky Branch marina. Charter member, Bill Guest, on the walkway.



Photo 10. Beach-launching Demons and FJs at the Rocky Branch public use area.



Photo 11. Demon class start at first BLSC invitational regatta, off Rocky Branch public use area.

Other significant racing events for Club members during this period included the following:

1969 - Rae and Jim Dunn won the Wichita Centennial Trophy, presented by the Ninescah Yacht Club to the winner of the largest one-design fleet (Demons) in their CSSA summer regatta on Lake Cheney.

1969 – Charles Richardson, Bobbie Richards crewing, won a match race series against the Fort Smith SC, sailing Demons on Beaver lake.

1970 - BLSC hosted a combined FJ Districts/Demon National Championship Regatta . Something over 50 boats in two one-design classes participated.

1971 – Ed Clement won the South Coast 23 class at the Sugar Bowl Regatta, Lake Pontchartrain, LA, Hans Doege and Jim Dunn crewing.

1971 – BLSC hosted the first round of the USYRU O’Day Cup single-handed competition in cat-rigged (mainsail only) FJs.

1972 – Rae and Jim Dunn won the Demon Class National Championship on Lake Perry west of Kansas City.

1972 – Rae and Jim Dunn and Cecil England with Charles Richardson crew finished first and second respectively in the Demon class at the CSSA frostbite regatta on Lake Fort Gibson (Photo 13). Go BLSC!

1974 – BLSC members (Charles Richardson, John McCain, Jim Dunn, August van Pouche, Tom Jones) took delivery on a bulk purchase of five Lasers in order to race one-design (Photo 14).



Photo-12: Trophy presentation at the first BLSC invitational regatta, Rocky Branch public use area. Left to right: Anne England (in rose-red), Commodore Charles Richardson, Demon sailor Ross \_\_\_ from Kansas City, Cecily England (in pink) and Demon sailor Emily Skinner (in blue) from Kansas City.



Photo 13: The England family were enthusiastic sailors and trailed their Demon extensively to regattas. Left to right are Jeff, Dan, Cecil and Bill Anderson.

1975 – (8-year-old son) Eric and Jim Dunn finished fourth in the FJ district championship held on Lake Maumelle (Photo 15). They won the first race of the series.

1977 – BLSC hosted the first round of the O’Day Cup single-handed competition in Lasers.

1977 – BLSC team (Charles Richardson, Jim Dunn, Wes Eckels) defeated the Tsa-La-Gi team 3:2 in Flying Scots on Lake Fort Gibson in the first round of the USYRU Prince-of-Wales match race competition, but were defeated 3:0 at the next level of competition by the Houston, TX, team on Lake Ray Hubbard racing Solings. (Cecil England replaced Wes Eckels who couldn’t get free from work.).

1978 – Jim Dunn won the first round of the O’Day Cup single-handed competition with finishes of 1-1-1-3-1, racing Lasers on Lake Maumelle, but didn’t proceed to the next level of competition on Lake Jacomo.

From late in the 1960's through most of 1970, BLSC members participated in first rounds of the following USYRU (now US Sailing) tiered events in addition to those mentioned above.



Photo 14: BLSC Lasers rounding marks of the match race, slalom course, off Rocky Branch public use area.

*Mallory Cup* (senior men): Flying Scots on Grand Lake (Dave Gosnell, Ed Clement, Jim Dunn), Catalina 22s on Grand Lake (Tom Jones, Bob Ellis, Jim Dunn), Flying Scots on Lake Keystone (Cecil England, Charles Richardson, Jim Dunn), Lightnings on Grand Lake (Cecil England, Tom Jones, Jim Dunn), and J-24s on Grand Lake (Jerry Havens, Louis Thibodeaux, Jim Dunn). (Mike Greene also sailed in the latter.)

*Adams Cup* (senior women): Thistles on Lake Keystone (no recollection of names).

*Sears Cup* (juniors): Lightnings on Lake Jacomo (Bill Anderson, Dan England, Bobbie Richards).

*O'Day Cup* : Lasers on Lake Keystone (Jay Havens), Butterfly scows on Lake Lotawana (Jim Dunn), Lasers on Beaver Lake (Jim Dunn).

*Prince-of-Wales* (match racing): Flying Dutchman on Beaver Lake (Ed Buckle and crew), Snipes on Beaver Lake (Charles Richardson, Jim Dunn), J-24s on Lake Hefner (Tom Jones, Jim Dunn, one other), Irwin-27s against Tsa-La-Gi on Lake Fort Gibson (Bill Justiss, Tom Jones, Jim Dunn).



Photo-15. Eric Dunn with his FJ District fourth place trophy.

*An Odyssey of two BLSC families*

In 1971, Ed Clement launched his South Coast-23 in the Arkansas River below Fort Smith, proceeded through the locks to the Mississippi, then down the Mississippi to New Orleans in time for the annual Sugar Bowl regatta on Lake Pontchartrain. With Hans Doege and Jim Dunn crewing, they won the first race in the SC-23 fleet, catching the local hotshot when he overstood the last weather mark. They finished respectively the second day and Ed was able to trail his boat home bringing the first place trophy. Kara and David Gosnell had previously inquired if there were any boats for charter. The commodore of the New Orleans Yacht Club offered his, the only condition being that his son accompany Kara and David. Rae Dunn went aboard one of the three RC boats as a spectator on Saturday, but was recruited by the chairman to help record finish times. It seems that she and the chairman were the only

ones left sober by the time boats began to finish. She was in solid with the chairman for Sunday's race. Jim recalls standing with the masses while she came up the gang plank to the New Orleans Yacht Club bearing clip boards of results under her arm.

In 1970 the Clements and Gosnells chartered a 30' ChrisCraft Capri to sail for two weeks in the Virgin Islands. By the time they returned, they had challenged each other to buy a sailboat in Europe and sail it back across the Atlantic. Neither had ever crossed an ocean before. They decided that they would be the first members of BLSC to do so. And they did! The original plan was for both families to go to England in 1972, buy a boat, and sail it back. The Clements flew to England in 1972 and bought a new Swedish Albin Vega 27. They sailed as far as the Canary Islands before they had to fly back home due to family health problems. Ed put the boat in storage in the Canary Islands until the following year.

Meanwhile, because of financial considerations, the Gosnells didn't get to England to buy their boat until 1973. In May of 1973, they bought a 3 year old Golden Hind 31, a very well respected and proven ocean crossing sailboat that was built in England. David took a one year leave of absence from the Baldwin Piano Company and planned a rather busy year of sailing and sight-seeing. The first time they had ever been out of sight of land, they crossed the English channel. They then lowered the boat's mast and motored up the Seine River to Paris France. After a week in Paris, they proceeded to cruise the French canals (through 250 locks) and finally down the Rhone River, exiting into the Mediterranean Sea near Marseille some six weeks after having entered the Seine. Since the English channel crossing had been such a short hop, ( if you go east for just a few hours, land **had** to show up), David considered the 450 mile trip to the Balearic Islands to be their first real trial of going to sea. As fate would have it, they were to get a real serious introduction. They set out from Marseille motoring in a flat calm. Near sundown the first day, they were hit with what the locals call a Mistral wind, one that comes down the Rhone valley all the way from the Alps, and blows far out to sea. It was a very strong and relentless wind, with 20' seas building up and with many gusts up to 70 mph. They were unable either to sail or motor into the wind. They lay hove-to for 25 hours before the winds finally came down into the 40's. Then they ran before the wind with minimum canvas, and learned a thing or two about their new boat and sailing in an ocean environment. Using their \$16 plastic sextant and a boxed quartz watch, they did indeed find the Balearic Islands and made their landfall at Palma Mallorca. (This was before the days of GPS.) By that time, salt water had gotten into their engine via the stern exhaust pipe so the engine couldn't be started, their cockpit dodgers were torn and two of their batten pockets were blown out. Welcome to the world of ocean cruising! David says if he could have gone back home at that moment without the embarrassment of facing his friends, he would have sold the boat right there and called the whole thing off. But, luckily, he didn't. They sailed on to Gibraltar and the Mediterranean gave them a second dose of heavy weather as a going away present. What they did not know at that time, was that they would not see really heavy weather again for many, many years at sea. When the Gosnells got to the Canary Islands, they met Ed Clement, who had returned to sail his boat across the Atlantic at the same time. The two things that Ed seemed to have planned for sustenance on that trip were lots of potatoes and rum. Ed eventually launched his boat in Beaver Lake where he sailed it out of Larue for many years. When their year was up, the Gosnells sold their boat to a Canadian couple in the British

Virgin Islands. That couple sailed the boat to New Zealand. Eventually it was holed and sunk while at anchor at Kandavu Island, Fiji, in a Pacific cyclone.

In 1978, the Gosnells had a new cutter rigged Golden Hind 31 built in England and shipped to Arkansas. They sailed it on Beaver Lake, out of Rocky Branch marina, until 1983, when they had it shipped to Savannah Georgia. From there they sailed down the Inter Coastal waterway to Ft Lauderdale, then out to the Bahamas, to Bermuda, the Azores, Ireland, Spain, Portugal, the Canary Islands, the Windward islands in the Caribbean, Puerto Rico, Panama, thru the Panama Canal, the Galapagos islands, Marquesas Islands, the Tuamotu Archipelago, Tahiti, Moorea, Raiatea, Bora Bora, Tonga, and Fiji, winding up in New Zealand. There, after a very successful 2 ½ year cruise, they sold their second ocean-going boat.

To complete the odyssey, the Gosnells bought a 36' Cape George Cutter in San Diego in 1991. They lived aboard and cruised the South Pacific continuously until late 2002 when they sold the boat, returned to NW Arkansas and bought a home in Bella Vista. They now have a small campervan, but no sailboat, not even Dave's first love, a 9-foot sailing dinghy sold by Sears and to which he almost immediately added a bowsprit. Over a lifetime, Dave's interest evolved from plane pilot, to glider pilot, to blue water pilot. Ed Clement endowed the herb garden in Fayetteville's Botanical Garden in memory of his wife, Diane, before his death.

(Most of the foregoing was submitted by David Gosnell.)

#### *BLSC's Big Move*

Arrangements at Rocky Branch began to deteriorate in the early 1970's. BLSC scheduled a second district O'Day Cup regatta: one-design, single-handed competition in bring-your-own Lasers. Unfortunately, that was a weekend when the Corps without notice closed the Rocky Branch public use area in order to pave the roads. In addition, they initiated a fence-building project to prevent anyone from driving, i.e., launching boats, on the beach. BLSC completed the regatta by launching near the ramp on the backside of the use area deep in the cove facing LaRue. The ultimate demise of centerboard sailing and racing, as we had known it, was clear at this point. Maybe the Corps didn't object so much to our launching boats off the beach as they did to the occasional tire carcass that was left there.

A new owner of the Rocky Branch Marina did not want to be liable for injuries stemming from our dock and barge attached to his leased property. We resolved this by agreeing to pay for one of his moorings in the marina for our RC boat. Ed Clement paid \$100 to BLSC and moved our dock to his shoreline at LaRue. However shortly thereafter, Jim Dunn received a phone call from the Marina to the effect that our pontoon boat was sinking and that they had grounded it for us on the far shore of the marina. Using Cecil England's Shenandoah Electric equipment, the Club had recently refinished and repainted the iron pontoons with rust retardant and apparently had chipped through one of those. Jim took a bolt cutter, borrowed someone's dinghy, and rescued the motor. We received a pittance for the boat "as-is"; Jerry Havens found the buyer.

Racing continued at Rocky Branch, principally limited to keelboats, sometimes starting from the

Marina itself or with sailboat owners taking turns as race committee. Meanwhile owners of several of the boats in the Rocky Branch Marina were becoming dissatisfied with the service there. Jim Dunn moved his Cal-25, *Algedi*, to the Lost Bridge Marina and commuted to Rocky Branch for races. A dock broke loose in a storm from the northwest and badly holed Glen Haley's Columbia 24. The Club began to look for a shoreline of their own during the spring of 1978. Initially because of the open expanse of water there, we hoped to stay in the Rocky Branch area. We considered vacant land near LaRue deep in the cove behind the public use area (Photo 4) . This was rejected on the basis of being too exposed with too little slope for viable dock management – as was most of the east shore of the LaRue peninsula. Bob Ellis made contact with a realtor serving Lost Bridge Village, and obtained the plat-map of BLSC's present location. He, Barbara Havens, and Rae Dunn scouted the property and reported back that it had potential , being well-protected from the wind and located in a deepwater cove with a reasonable slope for anchoring docks. Between the two lots available, the Club made an initial offer which was rejected on the lot where docks #4 and #5 now reside. The one bordering the road, which would give us immediate access, soon came up for sale and our offer was accepted in 1978. Bob Ellis, being a Business School faculty, recommended that the core members form a partnership called the Arkansas Yacht Club Partnership. This agreement was executed June 27, 1978. Its sole purpose was to cosign a note borrowing the purchase price of \$13,500 from the First National Bank in Fayetteville, then to transfer both debt and property to a newly formed, non-profit corporation called The Beaver Lake Sailing Club. Bylaws were patterned after those of the Windycrest SC. With some paid legal assistance, Bob produced the necessary documents with efficient dispatch. The initial partnership had served its purpose and was dissolved. Incorporation of the BLSC was completed in 1979. The eight charter members were Jerry Havens, Jim Dunn, Cecil England, Tom Jones, Bob Ellis, Dave Pelphrey, Gordon McNeil and Bill Guest. We were ready to build our first 8-slip dock (ultimately dock #2).

But first we needed to remove the submerged dead trees and actually receive permission from the Corps of Engineers to install a private dock. The latter was critical in two respects: First, because no private docks were allowed on Beaver Lake at that time, and second because years before the dam was completed and because they would own the shoreline, the Corps had decided to allow 6 commercial dock franchises on Corps property and designated their locations, i.e., Lost Bridge, Starkey, Rocky Branch, etc. At the outset this policy seemed set in stone. No one can truly appreciate commodore Jerry Havens' persuasive ability in reaching a compromise with the Corps of Engineers, principally represented by lake manager Cleo Dark. Certainly the Windycrest SC on Lake Keystone had already set a precedent, having received permission to install privately owned docks on the shoreline of a recently built Corps reservoir (Lake Keystone). Eventually after filling out endless forms and filing our development plans, an official letter was received from the Corps office in Washington, DC, granting us the privilege of placing Corps-approved docks on Corps shoreline adjacent to our property, dropping Corps-approved moorings in front of same, and restricting their use to members of the private club – us! We were compelled by Corps policy not to deny access to the water by the general public using the existing gravel road which is now our concrete ramp. Quoting Commodore Havens directly, "... Corps approval – you're right it was a close thing .... I do think that Dave and June Pelphrey were of tremendous help – they had political contacts, invisible to me, that I'm sure helped make the difference. I don't think that the Arkansas congressional delegation (which included BLSC member Morris Henry) was ever directly involved, but it

is very unlikely that it would have ever been able to get done without their nod – I think that Dave and June may have helped there.”

After a preliminary survey by Bob Ellis, Tom Jones and Bill Justiss, a first work day was called to pull trees. Justiss brought his Jeep with an electric winch on the front down to the shoreline. With scuba gear, two air tanks on his back, and no diving buddy, he swam the cable down through cold, murky water filled with grasping tree limbs and attached the cable - repeatedly. Sometimes he used a bow saw to saw the limbs off 20 to 50 feet underwater. We accumulated a small pile of limbs and stumps on the shore that day. But it was apparent that the battery-powered jeep winch lacked sufficient power to effect the task at hand. The next work day, Glen Haley brought his company’s (Shiloh Tank in Springdale) boom truck with half-inch cable, and we were in business. Bill Justiss continued his tedious, dangerous, single-handed efforts. More than once we waded in the water at the end of the day to help get his air tanks ashore. Pictured from left to right in Photo 16 are Jim Dunn, Glen Haley, Bill Guest, August Van Pouche, and Bill Justiss.



Photo 16. Pulling stumps and trees at the current BLSC property.

Once sufficient shoreline was cleared, each of 8 of us loaned BLSC \$2000 in order to begin dock construction. Photo 17 shows the dock shortly after it was installed with a few boats already in place. Jim Dunn soon moved *Algedi* from Lost Bridge marina as did others from Rocky Branch (Photo 18). Note Bob Ellis’ yellow Catalina 22 already on one of the six initial moorings. We added six more later.

From 1980 through 1985, racing in BLSC evolved in several directions. Corrected times for races during the annual spring and fall series were calculated using Local Portsmouth Numbers (LPN). These were correction factors which remained anchored to the published PN, but which were continuously updated for each participating boat after each race day, thus reflecting actual past performance. Use of the LPN was felt justified because our racers had boats and sails of varying ages and wear, and the sailors themselves represented a wide variety of athletic ability. BLSC introduced pursuit racing in the form of the Arkansas Cup series: Four 8-20 mile distance races were scheduled corresponding to major holidays (Memorial Day, Fourth of July, Labor Day and Columbus Day) with one throw-out. Using published PHRF handicaps, which are in units of seconds/mile, and depending on the measured length of the course, we determined a starting time for each boat which would result in a photo finish if all boats sailed to their potential. Each boat was on the honor system to start at its designated time, and the first boat to finish was to record the order of all other finishers. Before a race, each boat was expected to declare spinnaker or non-spinnaker and jib greater or less than 135% with their PHRF adjusted accordingly. To illustrate, Jim Dunn describes the greatest Arkansas Cup in BLSC history



Photo 17: First dock installed (now #2) at the current BLSC property.

(at least for him). “The date is Columbus Day, 1983 (or 1984) with gusty wind from the SSW at 10-20. Tom Jones had sold his Santana 525 to Vince Seidel, who couldn’t race that day, so Tom and I borrowed it back. That left Rae, Ed Clement, and Morris Henry on our Cal 25, *Algedi*, with our teenage son, Eric,



Photo 18: Slips filled and moorings in place, first BLSC dock (now #2) at current location.

steering. Tom declared spinnaker and jib < 135% while Eric declared no- spinnaker and jib > 135%. I loaned my old 150% dacron jib to Glen Haley for his Columbia 24, so Glen declared the obvious no-spinnaker, jib > 135%. The course was set for 20 miles, starting at Slate Gap Island, to accommodate sailors coming downlake from the Breeze Lovers SC, rounding Starkey Island, back to Slate Gap Island, to Starkey Island and finish at the throat of Moulder Hollow well inside Point 4. Haley with a 23 minute advantage as well as *Algedi* had vast leads by the time we started. We finally caught *Algedi* at the final rounding of Starkey Island, separated by five boat lengths (Haley was already half-way home and untouchable.) *Algedi* closely covered our every tack on the beat to the finish, perhaps a dozen altogether, and we couldn't break through. *Algedi* finished ahead by seven boat lengths. What can I say? He's my kid and he learned well."

In 1985, Rae and Jim Dunn deeded the Dave Durst Memorial trophy to BLSC, to be presented to the winning club, matching the Breeze Lover SC fleet against that of BLSC. PN were used to correct times on a distance race and the final club scoring only reflected the top three finishers for each club. The Breeze Lovers, most of whose members moored their boats along the Coppermine channel, captured the trophy many times in subsequent years. Russell Lake and his father, Lloyd, were primary movers in the Breeze Lovers SC. Russell later joined the BLSC.



*Dave Durst  
Courtesy of Special Collections, U of A Libraries*

Photo 19. Dave Durst: early NW Arkansas sailor and scuba diver; early innovator of underwater, marine photography; chairman of the University of Arkansas Art Department.

To take advantage of when the wind actually was blowing (a sometimes chancey occurrence on Beaver), the Club introduced the Round-LaRue, "Clipper-Cup" trophy to honor June and Dave Pelphry. The course was from a no-wake buoy in front of the BLSC dock, rounding a no-boats buoy off the tip of the Dam Overlook Public Use Area, and finishing at a Corps marker close to the Highway 12 bridge. Any skipper could sail the course as many times as desired on days of his own choosing, and in either direction. The boat with the shortest elapsed time, based on the honor system, during the year was declared the annual winner. It was tough to break four hours. The closest for *Algedi* was a little over 4.5 hours heading south to north, but during their voyage they lost their foredeck woman overboard during a spinnaker jibe near the old powerline notch, dropped the spinnaker to effect a rescue and then re-hoisting. Russell Lake, in a friend's J-24, started an hour behind them, beating their time and winning the Clipper Cup for 1989. Next year in 1990, Jim Dunn crewed on Bob Power's J-22 in another attempt. With the wind in the north, they started at BLSC, popped the chute after rounding the mark at Dam Overlook, and planned under spinnaker most of the way to the tip of the LaRue peninsula. The wind

began to die in the Coppermine channel; they shifted up to their 155% genoa and finished in under four hours for the winning time that year. On October 17, 1995, Ray Asfahl sailing his Hobie-33 with Vince Siedel crewing completed the course south-to-north in 3 hours, 50 minutes and 11 seconds.

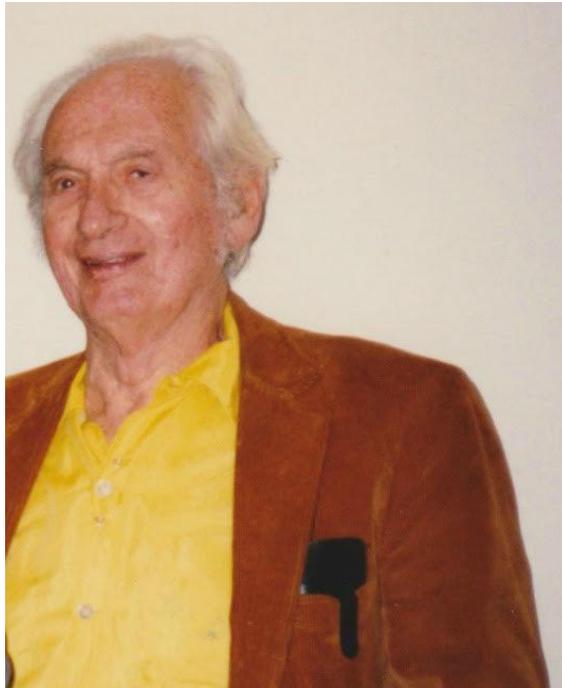


Photo 20. BLSC charter member, Gordon McNeil. (Courtesy of David McNeil.)

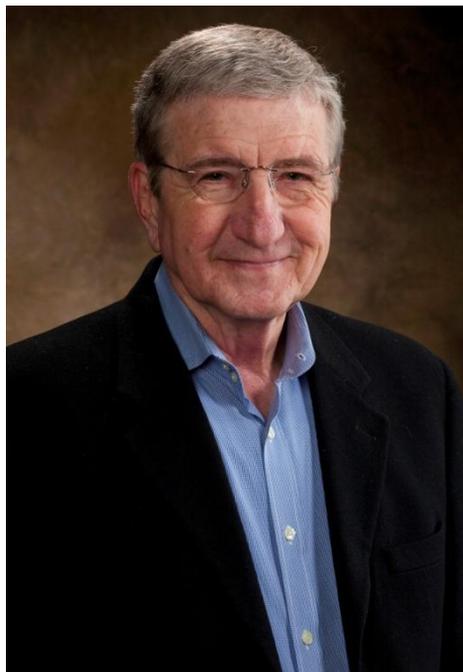


Photo 21. Jerry Havens: Charter member and former Commodore.

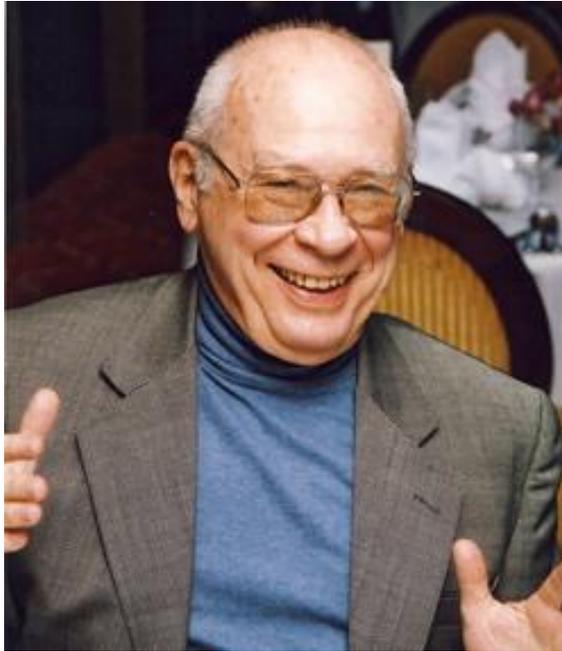


Photo 22. Bob Ellis: Charter member, former Vice Commodore and Treasurer.

Meanwhile back at BLSC, our concrete launch ramp was poured during the winter of 1980-1981. Docks #1 and #3 were added over time, but at that point we recognized that Club facilities were at capacity. BLSC members Dorothy and Lloyd Seaton came to our rescue. In the mid 1980's the adjacent lot and future home of our docks #4 and #5 came up for sale and they bought it. BLSC still had other debts from various projects and couldn't see clear to buy it. Dorothy and Lloyd held their lot until 1991 at which time they sold it to the BLSC essentially at their cost – a marvelous gesture by two of our many dedicated Club members.

### **BLSC Infrastructure**

A visual survey of BLSC's home on the lakeshore will reveal considerable infrastructure, e.g., docks, ramps, buildings, etc. These developments didn't just happen. Throughout BLSC's history, members pitched in when a need was identified. Without attempting to name everyone who contributed, the following list includes those who were the primary movers behind the various projects.

#### *The Pavilion.*

By 1994, the only structures on the property, aside from the docks, were a dilapidated metal-clad tool shed, a couple of wooden, donated picnic tables, and the Club's infamous, unisex, 1-hole outdoor privy, the latter located about where the Club's smoker now is parked. The suggestion was made that the Club needed a more central location for members to meet, relax, make a snack, and find shelter from the sun and the occasional rain shower. No one wanted walls to block the inspiring view of the waterfront, e.g., sailboats, docks, sparkling water, a pair of geese leading a flotilla of goslings, etc., so the idea of an open-sided pavilion was hatched. The design of the structure was a group effort by the BLSC Board and a few contributing members. The plan included the present enclosed area at the north

end of the pavilion, to include a small kitchen area where it still exists and a stool and shower stall. The latter were never installed, and their proposed location now exists as a storage area for the kitchen.

The first physical step was site preparation. A little shovel work immediately revealed that the location was underlain by a rough limestone shelf. A backhoe operator was contracted to remove the fractured and uneven rocks, but he suffered a heart attack the first day of work. Ted Willis became the instant backhoe operator designate, learning by doing. A concrete slab measuring 22 x 32 feet was poured, including plumbing for the kitchen/bathroom area. Tim McMahon took the lead in framing up the structure, and all work was completed in 1994, including replacement of the existing tool shed with the current, much improved facility. Cost was about \$6000, a remarkable bargain based on volunteer effort. The Club awarded Tim a free year's BLSC membership for his extraordinary effort and time spent. Aside from the kitchen, the unenclosed area measures 22 x 24 feet. Its multipurpose use to the Club has evolved to include skippers' meetings, potlucks, and a place to dance during numerous summer, special events when live music is provided. (Photo 23, details thanks to Ted Willis and Tim McMahon.)

#### *The Boat Trailer*

In the absence of commercial boatyard facilities on Beaver Lake, much of routine sailboat maintenance has been and continues to be done by the owners themselves. In the mid nineties, owners of most boats in the 21 – 25 foot range also owned a relatively low-cost trailer and could conveniently haul the boats on the Club ramp to accomplish the necessary tasks. However, former Commodore Vince Seidel recognized an increasing trend in our Club to larger and larger boats, i.e., in excess of 30 feet l.o.a and weighing many tons. To alleviate the need for each owner to make his own now sizable investment in a trailer, Vince proposed that members share a Club boat trailer. Being an accomplished machinist, he drew a plan and in 1993 proceeded with the construction – for the most part unassisted. The longitudinal frame is 6 inch steel U-beam. Six adjustable, padded uprights are available on each side, each capable of being swung away from the boat in order to access the pad areas. A plank scaffolding is hinged so that it may be swung close to the boat to facilitate work higher up on the hull. The original chassis of the trailer consisted of four tires independently mounted at the corners of the trailer. Later Ted Willis recognized the limited load-bearing strength of this design. He acquired and mounted four complete axles so that the load is now borne by four tires on each side, eight total (Photo 24). To date, the largest boat ever serviced has been a Hunter-38 with a displacement of nearly nine tons. There is no cost to BLSC members for use of the trailer. (Based on recollections by Ted Willis and Dean Ward.)

#### *The Charlton House*

BLSC's club-house, "Charlton House", faces our cove and most of the Club facilities, i.e., docks, pavilion, ramp, etc.. Photo 24 shows its southeast corner; Photo 23 was taken from its front gallery. Its external dimensions are 30 x 60 feet. It contains separate, fully plumbed, men's and women's restrooms with hot showers, a restaurant quality, stainless steel kitchen, and a large meeting/banquet hall. It is climate controlled with central heat and air. Construction by John Charlton's crew in slack time started



Photo 23. BLSC Pavilion as seen from the Charlton House gallery.



Photo 24. The Club trailer as it appears in 2015.

early in 2005 and was complete at the end of 2007. Most construction costs were underwritten by the Charlton family as a generous gift to the members of the Beaver Lake Sailing Club. Other noteworthy

member contributions included Jesse Johnson of White River Hardwoods who donated all of the wood trim for the building, while Tim McMahon of Five Star Heating & Air sold the HVAC to the Club at cost.



Photos 25 – 28. Construction stages of Charlton House (*Courtesy of former Commodore, Jay Havens*)

The following are (slightly edited) recollections by John Charlton's wife, Mary Lou, and good friends, Susan and Tom Unger.

John Charlton (Photo 29) began sailing in the British Virgin Islands. He made several trips, each time taking a handful of his sailing buddies with him. Some were avid sailors while for others it was their first time to experience the wonders of sailing. One of his favorite cruises was the year that he took his children and grandchildren for a sailing holiday in the BVIs. The grandchildren still say that it was their favorite vacation. John was a member of the U. S. Power Squadron and served as Commander of the local Beaver Lake Sail and Power Squadron. He took and taught several of their classes .

After returning home from an eight week cruise on the Intercoastal Waterway aboard "The Proud Mary", a 38-foot coastal cruiser, he sold that boat with the intention of making sailing his focus.



Photo 29. John Charlton, visionary (*Courtesy of Susan and Tom Unger*).

He bought his first sailboat, a Newport 33 (still named “Zephyr”), in 2002 but after a short while decided that it was time for a larger boat. He purchased a 38-foot Hunter sailboat, “The Queen Mary”, in 2004 and was all set. In the meantime he began to dream of a club-house for the Beaver Lake Sailing Club. He began drawing plans and visiting with Club members to get ideas for what was needed. After his unexpected passing in October, 2005, John’s ashes were sprinkled in the Lake close to one of his favorite places to be, the Beaver Lake Sailing Club. The club-house was dedicated and named “The Charlton House” in December, 2010. His family thanks everyone in BLSC for their kindness and especially for naming their club-house in his memory.