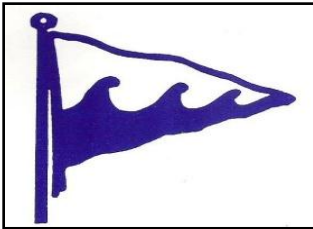


## ***Marionette - 55 Years Young, Still Winning, Still Pretty***



*Marionette* is a Dolphin 24, hull #12, S&S design #1497, LOA 24', disp. 4500lbs, built in 1960 by Marscot Plastics/O'Day Corporation in Fall River, Massachusetts. She is still winning races, and she still is pretty. Her home port for the last 20 years has been Niantic Bay YC in Niantic, Connecticut.

**Here she is, posing, early Spring, first in her slip.**



Her favorite regatta is the Off Soundings Club (OSC) Spring Series which is a 2 race regatta usually held in early June - Race 1 from Watch Hill, Rhode Island out to Block Island, and the following day Race 2 around Block Island. OSC is an 82 year old club that has no shore facilities and runs 2 regattas a year, the Spring Series,

and the Fall Series - the latter in September, also a 2 race series with Race 1 from New London, CT to Greenport, Long Island, New York, and Race 2 the following day is an around the buoys race in Gardiners Bay east of Shelter Island.



In addition to great racing with large fleets, great shore parties are a tradition. After racing each day there is a traditional party 'under the tent' with the Bourbon, Scotch, Gin and Vodka barrels identified only by their signal flags. OSC racing crews occasionally have problems identifying the Race Committee signals but B, S, G and V signals are never missed. After allowing the prescribed marinating period, the club's officers, in their blue blazers, read the results to 700/800+ assembled racing crews.

Block Island is 13 miles off the Rhode Island shore. The Spring Series starts at the eastern end of Fishers Island Sound east of the Watch Hill lighthouse. The course is usually 18-20 miles ending at BI Bell #2 near the entrance to Block Island's Great Salt Pond. The Race Committee takes due note of the wind conditions and forecast, most importantly, they recognize the importance of Racing Rule #1 - getting the fleet to Block Island in time for the party. This occasionally results in a shortened course, as was the case in 2015.



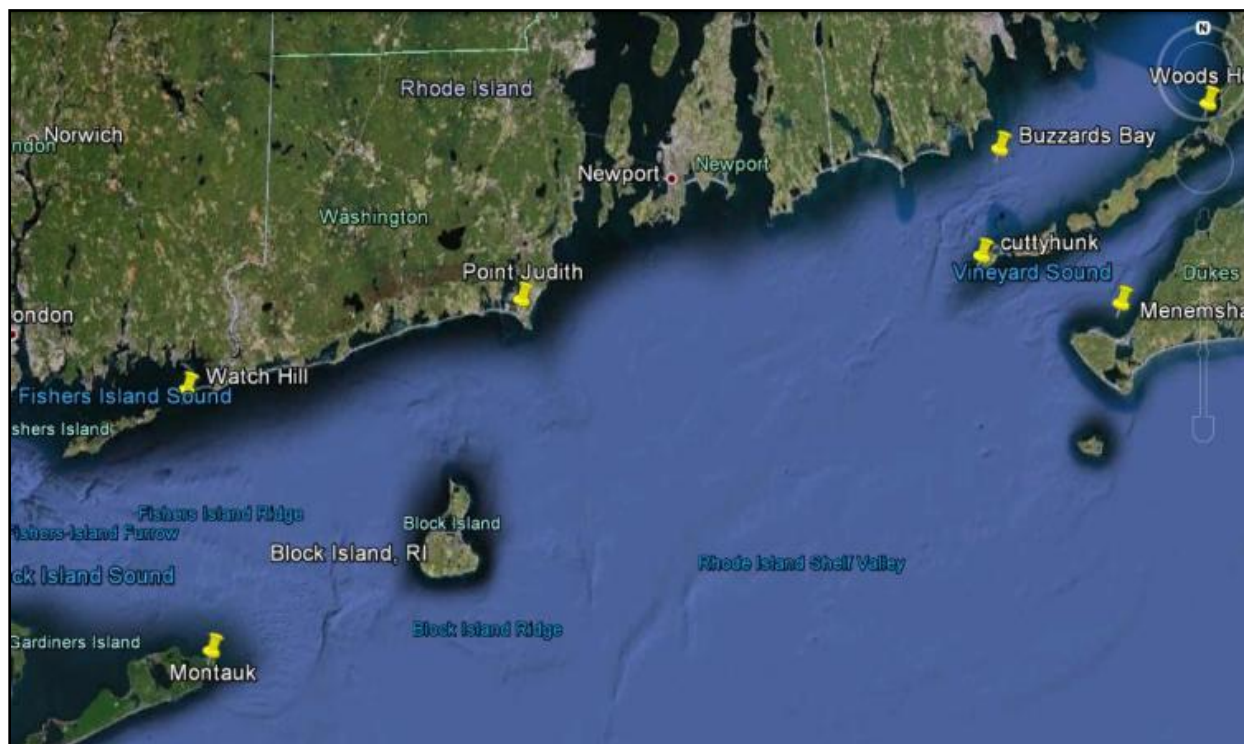
As the principle Race Committee boat the Club is blessed to have the use of the 60' motor sailer *NOR'EASTER*, built in 1927 and owned by Henry Dupont IV. A real classic.

Competition is fierce and high caliber. Over the years these regattas have attracted some of the best east coast sailors, including several America's Cup

skippers. A time on time version of the PHRF handicap is used, plus a club imposed temporary 'performance results penalty' on class winners to help keep racing competitive. *Marionette* enjoys the distinction of having the highest PHRF spinnaker rating, 252, in the entire 500 +/- OSC fleet, thankfully off set by its very high crew performance rating....

The Spring Series is held on a Friday/Saturday and usually involves getting your boat to a harbor near the eastern end of Fishers Island Sound on Thursday. Along with many, many other OC competitors Dodson's Boatyard in Stonington's inner harbor has been *Marionette's* perennial choice. The bedlam at Dodsons at 7:30AM, and the nervous wait for their launch to get you out to your mooring on an OSC Friday morning, is legendary....

A little bit about the geography of the racing area and then we'll get to *Marionette's* results in these Spring Series regattas over the past several years, measured not only by the OSC but by the S&S Association's Global Challenge Trophy Award committee.



Google Maps views of the OSC racing area



A typical Spring Series Friday course has the Race Committee starting the first class about 10:30AM, usually a 7-8 knot southerly breeze, moving southwesterly and building, with tidal currents of 1-2 knots running basically east or west across the course. They might set a zig zag course with first leg a beat to a windward mark, then a long spinnaker run maybe to the 1BI bell off the northern point of Block Island, then a beat to the finish at the R2 bell off Great Salt Pond.

The 2015 situation was much different. The Race Committee had to deal with setting a course that could be sailed and completed in a light, shifty breeze, a one hour postponement due to no wind, a starting line adjustment, and a crowded, 60 boats in 9 minutes, finish in descending heavy fog. They deserve a lot of credit in tough conditions shepherding 13 classes and 118 boats, and then there was the post race party pressure!

The course chosen was designed to get the fleet to Block Island. The first leg was to 1BI and then a finish at the Great Salt Pond channel entrance marker, 2BI. The breeze got even lighter, shifted 180 degrees turning the leg to 1BI from a beat to a run. They shortened course to finish at 1BI, with fog so heavy at the end that *Marionette* navigated by GPS to get to the mark, then after finishing, slow careful motoring get to/find the entry channel at Great Salt Pond.

Race 2 on Saturday is typically a start off the entry to Great Salt Pond, counterclockwise around the island - the first leg a beat to the south east corner, a spinnaker reach to the southwest corner, a spinnaker reach/run to 1BI at the north end of the Island, and a beat to the finish at Great Salt Pond. Not this year - a stiff reefing breeze out of the northeast made the course clockwise around the Island. It was tough getting used to the island's beautiful cliffs and lighthouses on the other/starboard side.

It must be mentioned here that, in the 2015 Spring Series, *Marionette* was first in her class both days and had the best corrected time, consolidated for both races, in the entire 118 boat fleet. In the 9 years covered by this article *Marionette* won her class in this Series in 2008, 2010, 2012 and 2015.

For her performance in 2015 she was pleased to be nominated for the S&S Association's Global Challenge Trophy Award. She won this award in 2011, and in 2009 finished 2nd to *Dorade!* Her nomination in 2015 was based her performance racing the same course around Block Island. *Marionette*, the smallest boat racing, was one of only 3 boats to finish under 4 hours, and her corrected time was the **best corrected time for the entire 132 boat fleet!** In the words of Association Honorary Life Member and Secretary, Classic and Wooden Hulls, Patrick Matthiesen:

*Dorade won the 19.6 mile Castine Classic Yacht Race by a margin of 4.6% against classic competition with the 52 ft Q Class Falcon second, followed by two New York 32s. This win which your webmaster witnessed, was also under the watchful eye of Olin Stephens on the Committee Launch. Olin was celebrating his 100th Anniversary and later told friends seeing Dorade win was the best birthday present he could ever have received!*

*However, the most remarkable win was made by Ron Breault in his standard Dolphin 24 Marionette racing in a two day event organised by the Off Soundings Club on Long Island Sound for their 75th Spring Series. Marionette won both races decisively first in light air beating a Morgan 28 and an O'Day 34, and won the Block Island Race by 7 minutes against the next competitor in class C6 with a total fleet of over 100. Because of a Dolphin's shoal draft she can go into 'Dolphin Territory' where other yachts follow at their peril – a Dolphin can draw as little as 2ft 9 in. Keel yachts follow at their peril and many tens of thousands of dollars of keel damage have resulted over the years!*



We are space limited so will not get into agonizing detail regarding the various highlights but Patrick's comment about Dolphin Territory are worth developing. Block Island has both rocky and sandy shoals beneath its high bluffs. When the breeze is light it is sometimes better in close to the bluffs. *Marionette's* crew lifts the centerboard and gets in close to look for the better breeze. The big boats offshore look in enviously as we have often found just enough extra breeze to save our time.

Some have asked what happened in those years that *Marionette* did not win. The answer is she did not compete. In 2013, she was entered and ready to go and the weather forecast intervened.. With a wary eye to the weather she officially withdrew at 9:50 AM on Thursday. The marine weather 'upgrade' to gale warning at 7:14AM for Block Is Sound was determinative for us. Plus, we had 18 miles **due east** to sail to get to our mooring in Stonington on Thursday afternoon, in heavy rain and wind on the nose - Nope. This is big boat weather.

BLOCK ISLAND SOUND - ISSUED THUR 7:14 AM JUN 13 2013  
**GALE WARNING IN EFFECT FROM 8 PM EDT THROUGH FRIDAY MORNING ...**

THIS AFTERNOON... E WINDS 15 TO 20 KT WITH GUSTS UP TO 30 KT. SEAS 2 TO 4 FT. RAIN. VSBY 1 NM OR LESS. TONIGHT... NE WINDS 20 TO 25 KT WITH GUSTS UP TO 35 KT. SEAS 4 TO 7 FT. PATCHY FOG. RAIN. VSBY 1 NM OR LESS. FRI... NE WINDS 15 TO 20 KT WITH GUSTS UP TO 35 KT.... SEAS 5 TO 8 FT. PATCHY FOG. RAIN.

So, what happened in 2009, 2011 and 2014? *Marionette* took a break and went cruising in Maine!

Having covered the winning part we will close with the pretty part. The privilege of being the steady partner of a fast lady, is equaled only by being with her and having to deal with the endless pretty boat comments.



**Left:** *Marionette* at Payne's Dock, Great Salt Pond, Block Island, flying her battle flag;  
**Center:** A favorite position - leading bigger boats to the mark (note reefed main):  
**Right:** in close to shore, moving fast



All together, another a great early June weekend - thanks to our great crew, and our pretty, 55 year young, *Marionette* who still gets the job done.

**Left to right: Mike, Bruce, Ron and Nicole (Bruce's hat is down below)**