



Volunteering; by Peter Hinrichsen

At the grassroots level, the sport of dinghy sailing depends on volunteers.

Our sport wouldn't exist if it weren't for all the people who give up their free time to do all the work to run the sport.

Everybody plays their part. (Well, almost everybody.)

In my time I have been a fleet captain (several times), a sailing club secretary, a sailing club commodore, a newsletter editor, a regatta chairman, a principal race officer, a junior sailing instructor, an area junior regatta series organizer, a class regional representative, and a class district secretary.

I'm not trying to blow my own trumpet in listing the above jobs. All my friends who sail dinghies regularly end up making similar, or greater, contributions.

Some do much more.

One of my sailing friends from New Jersey served as president of his national class association for several years.

One of my sailing friends in Rhode Island ran almost single-handedly (well double-handedly with his wife) one of the most successful regattas on the Laser Masters circuit for many years.

I don't think I've ever run for election (against an opponent) for any of the jobs I've done. Usually it doesn't work like that.

Sometimes I've seen something that needed doing – and it was clear that nobody else was going to do it – so I just went and did it.

More often than not some greybeard in the club or the class, the local "godfather", took me aside and told me that I should be... the next newsletter editor, the next commodore, whatever.

I've mentioned before on this blog that after I moved to Rhode Island it felt strange that I wasn't doing anything to give back something to the sport.

That feeling didn't last long. About a year ago the Godfather made me an offer I couldn't refuse. Now I have a voluntary job.



Usually when I start one of these jobs I have no idea what I'm doing.

But that's OK. I can always ask my predecessors what to do. I can always find some

kind of mentor. If all else fails I can ask the Godfather for advice.

After a while I usually work out what I'm doing. And then I can start trying out new things to do the job even better.

Sometimes people give feedback to the folk doing these volunteer jobs. "You should have done that." "I wouldn't have done it that way."

Sometimes that criticism stings a bit but, if it's meant in the right spirit, it can be helpful. I try not to take it too personally.

The issue of volunteering is summed up well in [Laser Sailing: The Rules](#).

Rule #35 Volunteer. If you see something that needs to be done in your local fleet, club or district and it isn't being done or isn't being done as well as you think it should be done... then don't whine about it; do it yourself.

Rule #36 If you can't think of anything else you can do to help the sport, then be the guy that brings the beer.

http://www.propercourse.blogspot.ca/2013/04/volunteers_30.html