

Charleston Ocean Racing Association  
The Founders - The First 50 Years  
By Dan Machowski – CORA Historian

In the mid 1960s, keel boat racing in the Charleston area was organized under the banner of the Charleston Cruising Club (CCC). Archived records of their activities go back to 1965 and show that the races held were scored using the Cruising Club of America's (CCA) measurement rule system. During this time, races were conducted around the Charleston Harbor area as well as long distance races to the ports of Georgetown and Savannah.

Outside of Charleston, the Southern Ocean Racing Conference, known better as the "Southern Circuit" or just the "Circuit", was the attraction of the top US sailors looking for winter relief. A number of Charleston sailors were also attracted to these long-distance offshore events. Jimmy Holcombe on Adios, Bo Morrison aboard Obsession and Sonny Hankel sailing aboard Ted Turner's Cal 40 speedster Vamoose to name a few.

On November 27, 1967, a notice was sent to all Charleston Cruising Club members by Secretary R. M. "Sonny" Hanckel of a meeting to be held at the Carolina Yacht Club on December 4, 1967. The main topic was the Re-organization of the Charleston Cruising Club. On December 6, 1967, then Fleet Captain Jimmy Holcombe and William McGillvary "Bo" Morrison, Jr. placed a notice in the Charleston News and Courier newspaper of the filing for a Charter for CORA with the Secretary of State of South Carolina. The filing was recorded on December 12, 1967. At the meeting, verbal history has the discussions of a new name to be the Carolina Ocean Racing Association. However, with the realization of the involvement of the total area in racing, the new organization was named the Charleston Ocean Racing Association.

The first known meeting under the new organization name was held on April 11, 1968. When reorganization was completed, Jimmy Holcombe was elected as the first Commodore of the Charleston Ocean Racing Association (CORA) and served as such for many years. With our member's involvement in the SORC, CORA's first major sailing event was born with the establishment of the Fort Lauderdale to Charleston Race in 1967. Attracting sailors, as they headed back north after the circuit, this race can be viewed as the start of CORA's role in the world of hosting Major Offshore Sailing Events.

During this time, the discussion of rating systems clearly was on everyone's mind. The CCA rating system had been going through many changes, so much so that the rating requirements by CCA had grown into a 40-page document of various measurements. CORA took the path of using the Midget Ocean Racing Club (MORC) ratings. In 1977, Routt Reigart, CORA's measurer, worked tirelessly to secured for CORA its first major regatta, the MORC International Regatta. With the help of a young

new Charleston transplant, Tripp Fellabom, the event was once again a new founding for Charleston as a major regatta site.

One of the next, Founding's of CORA was the establishment of our identity with a Club Burgee. A contest was announced in 1978 and only two designs were submitted. One by Emmett Johnson and one by Douglas Boyd. The design by Douglas was accepted with a modification suggestion that a star be added to represent each of the four yacht clubs on Charleston Harbor. In February 1979, with Malcolm Swan was Commodore, our burgee was adopted.

Over the years, CORA has established a number of Offshore Races:

- The Alice Cup: Racing to Rockville
- The Sheriff's Cup: Race to Edisto
- The Indigo Cup: Race to Georgetown
- The Quicksilver Cup: Race to Hilton Head
- The Gulfstreamer: The Daytona to Charleston Race
- The Savannah Cup with the Chadham Sailing Club

CORA has also been a large player in offshore racing within the South Atlantic Yacht Racing Association (SAYRA).

- The Palmetto Cup – established by Tommy Harken and Tripp Fellabom became CORA's SAYRA event

Locally, two areas of harbor series were instituted in the 1980s.

- The Frostbite and the Summer Series

With the success of the Key West Race Week, many CORA boats traveled the distance to participate in the weeklong, hard fought races off the Southern Most Point of the US. With the desire and ambition, they wanted to see that all the CORA boats who were not able to get south could experience the feeling such as Key West.

In 1996, an agreement with SAYRA to host, for 5 years, the SAYRA Offshore Championship gave way to the birth of Charleston Race Week. With one weekend of racing vying for the Palmetto Cup and the next the SAYRA Championship, one of the US's largest and premier regattas was born.

CORA's has been continually present outside of the Charleston Harbor and represented by several boats in two Caribbean events: The Abacco Race Week and the Key West to Cuba Race. With our participation upon the high seas both locally and beyond, the next 50 years of CORA should well match the first 50.