

Sampaguita Sails The Shipwrights Regatta by Josh Wheeler

All photos by Crystal Craig

The southeasterly wind was perfect! Under full main and jib, Sampaguita, a Flicka 20, charged toward the starting line for the Cruising Two class, just under hull speed and close-hauled. One hand on the tiller, one on the mainsheet, Olivier luffed the main in the gusts to keep the rail out of the water. I fine-tuned the jib. The sound of the water rushing by would charm any old salt as we sat on the high side, grinning ear to ear.

It was March 26th, 2022 on Port Townsend Bay, and the 31st Annual Port Townsend Shipwright's Regatta was underway. A heavy, full-keeled, liveaboard cruiser like a Flicka 20 isn't much of a racing sailboat, but the Shipwrights Regatta isn't much of a race. At least for some. So it's cool.



No Boat Too Tall, No Boat Too Small



A Little Color to Brighten the Day

The regatta is really about community and participation. With four classes of boats: Racing, Thunderbirds, Cruising One, and Cruising Two, there was a place for every sailor and every sailboat.

As Sampaguita rounded the windward mark, we eased out the main and headsail, the wind moving to our starboard aft corner, and she leveled out on a broad reach.



Look Mom No Hands!

Ahead of us, the Thunderbirds were dropping their spinnakers and rounding the leeward mark, wrapping up the first of their two laps. After the reach mark and with a fading wind, somewhere between the French baguette and the coconut cookies, I

made the call to drop the jib and hank on the genoa.

Initially scheduled for February 26th, the race's organizers, the Port Townsend Sailing Association, chose to postpone the race due to forecasts for high winds. It was a good call as the day saw sustained winds over 30 knots and gusts over 50. With all the lead-up hype that occurred, canceling seemed too anti-climactic. Plus, it would deny the generous local sponsors the opportunity to buy the participants beer and pizza. Too much was at stake.

After rounding the leeward mark, having traded places with the Ranger 24, Tiny



We...Are...So...Salty

Dancer, and trying to keep pace with Pneuma, Sampaguita sailed into light air. A wind shift was afoot. With the four classes spread across the course, the wind hole set sails flapping as it moved from west to east. Strategies and headings changed as boats searched for air. When the westerly filled in a few minutes later, several boats converged at the second lap's windward mark. Tiny Dancer's circuitous outside route had paid off, now a boat length ahead of Sampaguita, with Flapdoodle and Apogee close behind.



Fan Favorite

The Port Townsend Sailing Association's committee boat, *Committee*, recently repowered with electric propulsion, was calling the shots for the day. Personed by PTSA board members and volunteers, they raise the flags, sound the horns, and other who-knows-what shenanigans. Pacific Cup-bound *Sir Isaac* won the Racing class and took line honors too. Next came the Thunderbirds, Port Townsend's de facto one-design class won by the always competitive, *Owl*. The Cruising One class, made up of the larger cruising boats with the most



Committee, the Committee Boat

entrants by far, saw the dark horse *Amelie* seize the day.

The west wind picked up as Apogee, Flapdoodle, Tiny Dancer, and Sampaguita battled it out on the backstretch. Though not all in the same class, as the saying goes, 'If you can't race the ones you love, race the ones you're with.' Or something like that. At the reach mark (which wasn't anymore because of the wind shift), Flapdoodle and Tiny Dancer tacked over while Apogee and Sampaguita just trimmed in the sheets. It was our turn to take the outside route. When we reached the final leeward mark, we were several boat lengths ahead of Tiny Dancer and neck and neck with Flapdoodle on a downwind leg to the finish. Apogee crossed the line, and Sampaguita beat Flapdoodle by the length of her bowsprit.



Next Stop the Pacific Cup

The after-party was at the Northwest Maritime Center in downtown Port Townsend. Alcoholic lubrication from the Port Townsend Brewery was ready on arrival, with high stacks of pizza boxes arriving soon after. With 33 boats showing up for the race, it appeared all represented and having fun. Results and perpetual awards were given. Some

were flattering, like the Wire Cruising Boat awarded to *Amelie* as the first cruising boat to finish. And others, just funny, like the Direction Helmet, given to fan favorite and *Sampaguita's* nemesis, *Tiny Dancer*. All were received with modesty and good nature.



The Mark Boat

In all honesty, *Sampaguita* had lost before she even started. Steering clear of the starting line crowds, she was too far off the mark to be competitive. Olivier and I hardly noticed. We were just enjoying the great sailing, being part of the event, and the delicious lunch his wife had prepared for us. If you missed the race this year, the 32nd Annual Port Townsend Shipwright's Regatta will be here before you know it. Start planning now.