



NATIONAL SAILING HALL OF FAME INDUCTS SIX

Bay Head, N.J. (October 6, 2015) – The Jersey Shore’s “Gold Coast,” was an especially appropriate location for the National Sailing Hall of Fame (NSHOF) to hold its fifth Induction Weekend, as the organization continues to fulfill its mission of recognizing Americans who have made outstanding contributions to the sport of sailing.

The members of the 2015 Class of Inductees, six of the sport of sailing’s significant contributors, were honored during ceremonies that were the highlight of a weekend of activities at Bay Head Yacht Club: sailing school founder Steve Colgate (Ft. Myers, Fla.), Olympic medalist Paul Foerster (Rockwall, Texas), Olympic medalist and author JJ Fetter (San Diego, Calif.), boat building innovators and brothers Meade and Jan Gougeon (both Bay City, Mich.) and U.S. Olympic Yachting Committee Director Samuel V. Merrick (Medford, N.J.), the recipient of the NSHOF’s 2015 Lifetime Achievement Award.



In their remarks, the Inductees were remarkably consistent: each had taken any and every opportunity to learn from others, and each knew they could not have achieved their success without significant support from others.

While thanking her parents for their ongoing support of her sailing, Olympic medalist and author JJ Fetter of San Diego said that after the birth of her daughters, “my mom raised both girls while I did an Olympic campaign in 2000. In fact, after the Olympics when I went to preschool a lot of the parents thought I was the nanny, and it took a few years before I could clear that up.” Fetter also cited the community at San Diego Yacht Club, which was “a hotbed of sailing” when she was a kid. “I learned so much from watching sailors like Lowell North, Carl Eichenlaub [both NSHOF Inductees] and Vince Brun.”

For Fetter, being at Bay Head Yacht Club for the Induction Ceremony was a return to where her Olympic career began. “It’s fun coming full circle to Barnegat Bay. The first time I sailed a 470 was here; US Sailing arranged a 470 clinic so that we could try these boats that had just been put in the Olympics for women.”

Olympic medalist Paul Foerster of Rockwall, Texas, said that this moment was about the thousands of people who had helped him. He recounted how his family had no experience in the sport when they relocated from Colorado to Texas and bought a boat. While they were a very competitive family, Foerster’s father had the foresight to recognize that they needed to sail with someone better in order to do well. “I have used that mantra for the rest of my sailing career,” said Foerster. “I’m not the best sailor in the world, but I can find somebody better to sail with so I can learn and get better. And they will make me and us a better team.”

Foerster estimated that he, and the other Inductees, had been the beneficiaries of thousands of miracles. “You don’t have to be in the Hall of Fame to have an incredible story. I’m honored for all the people I’ve sailed against, the coaches I’ve learned from... it’s an incredible journey I’ve been on.”

Likewise, boatbuilder Meade Gougeon acknowledged that he and his late brother, Jan Gougeon, had accomplished something that neither would have achieved alone and he felt they were “unlikely recipients” of this award. While Gougeon explained that they had grown up in Bay City, Mich., “an area that had no culture of sailing,” both became actively involved in making boats go fast. Ultimately they formulated an epoxy system – the West System® and Pro-Set epoxies – ideally suited to the needs of amateur boatbuilders which revolutionized boat construction and repair.

On the other end of the spectrum, Steve Colgate is credited with introducing over 130,000 people to the sport. An accomplished racing sailor, Colgate started the Offshore Sailing School, which he now runs with his wife Doris Colgate, in 1964. Collaborating with architect Jim Taylor, Colgate’s design concept – the Colgate 26 – became the 1997 Cruising World Magazine Boat of the Year. The author of numerous publications on the sport said the Induction was “a tremendous honor.”

Another lifelong racing sailor, Lifetime Achievement Award honoree Samuel V. Merrick, of Medford, N.J., was most closely associated on-the-water with the Thistle, E Scow and Soling classes. Taking over the Olympic program after the USA boycott of the 1980 Moscow Games, Merrick toured the nation giving clinics and speeches to promote Olympic sailing and subsequently orchestrated a restructuring of the Olympic Yachting Committee which instituted coaching and funding programs. In 1984, for the first time in U.S. Olympic sailing, a required post-Trials/pre-Games training camp was run in Long Beach, California, venue of both the Trials and the Games. Tuning partners for each competitor; daily team meetings; on-the-water coaching with photographic analysis; and other training techniques were instituted. Through the four-week camp, a group of top-notch individuals became a cohesive team, all learning, training and sharing their expertise. The efforts paid off with a U.S. sweep in Yachting – seven medals in seven events (three gold and four silver) – the best record of any U.S. team competing at the '84 Games.

In accepting the posthumous Lifetime Achievement Award for his father, Gregory Merrick noted that Sam Merrick was “passionate about sailing.”

The six members of the 2015 Class of Inductees, along with the 42 heroes of the sport who have previously been inducted, exhibit the values and sportsmanship which sailing promotes. It is the primary mission of the National Sailing Hall of Fame to preserve and share the legacy of these passionate contributors to the sport. Find out more at <http://www.nshof.org/>

Induction Background: Following a two-month period this spring during which sailors from all corners of the country nominated their choice for induction, a selection committee – made up of representatives from US Sailing, the sailing media, the sailing industry, community sailing, a maritime museum, a previous inductee, and the NSHOF Board – reviewed the broad spectrum of nominations.

Inductees are American citizens, 45 years of age or older, who have made significant impact on the growth and development of the sport in the U.S. in the categories of Sailing, Technical/Design and Contributor (coach, administrator, sailing media). Nominations of non-citizens were also considered if they influenced the sport in the U.S., and posthumous nominations were also accepted. The undertaking to recognize Americans who have made outstanding contributions to the sport of sailing is central to the mission of the NSHOF which was formed in 2005 and has completed phase one of its plan to establish a permanent facility on the historic waterfront of Annapolis, Maryland.

The Lifetime Achievement Award, first presented in 2014, inducts an American citizen, 55 years of age or older, who has had consistent involvement in sailing for a majority of his or her life and had success in the sport while also becoming successful and achieving noteworthy stature in a non-sailing career.

The invitation-only 2015 Induction Ceremony was held at the Bay Head Yacht Club (Bay Head, N.J.) and sponsored by Rolex Watch U.S.A. and Condé Nast.

For more on the Inductees, please visit: <http://halloffamers.nshof.org>

About the NSHOF: The National Sailing Hall of Fame is a not-for-profit educational institution dedicated to: preserving the history of the sport and its impact on American culture; honoring those who have made outstanding contributions to the sport of sailing; the teaching of math, science and American history; inspiring and encouraging sailing development; and providing an international landmark for sailing enthusiasts. The NSHOF has partnered with US Sailing and the U.S. Naval Academy, and is associated with yacht clubs throughout the country, in its efforts to recognize role models of outstanding achievement. For more information on the NSHOF, please visit: www.nshof.org

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2015 National Sailing Hall of Fame Inductees (alphabetical):

Steve Colgate (Ft. Myers, Fla.)

JJ Fetter (San Diego, Calif.)

Paul Foerster (Rockwall, Texas)

*Jan C. Gougeon (Bay City, Mich.)

Meade Gougeon (Bay City, Mich.)

*Samuel V. "Sam" Merrick (Medford, N.J.) – 2015 Lifetime Achievement Award

*posthumous