

LAKE HOPATCONG YACHT CLUB CELEBRATES  
A NEW ERA ON NEW JERSEY'S LARGEST LAKE

A NEW  
CENTURY OF  
SUMMERS

BY KATHLEEN N. WEBBER • PHOTOGRAPHY BY AUGUSTUS BUTERA





O

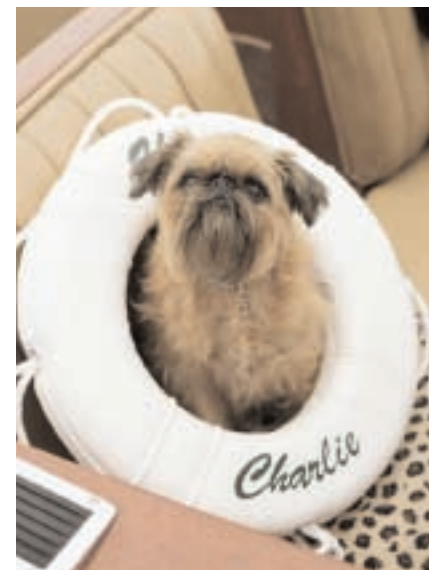
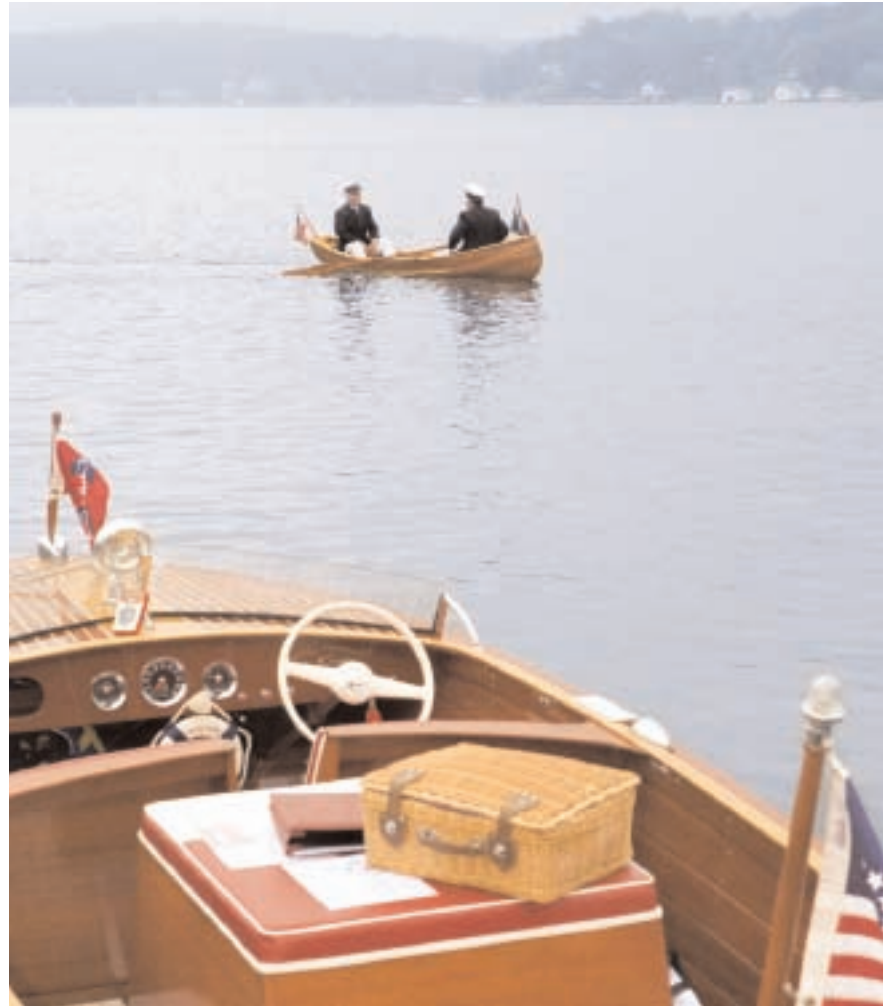
n any given Friday night at the Lake Hopatcong Yacht Club, fresh-faced college-age girls in starched white shirts and crested navy ties are setting up tables on one of the grand porches overlooking the largest lake in New Jersey. The red-and-white linens are placed on the wooden tables, and a warm June breeze blows in just as the first club member is greeted by name.

The club's stately white Georgian building, circa 1910, harkens back to a more genteel time when original members watched boat races from the shore in jacket and tie. Just beyond the porches' French doors is the ballroom, with its rustic ruff-hewn timber walls built to reflect the style of the great summer camps in the Adirondacks.

The massive native-stone fireplace nearby, with the club's giant burgee suspended from it, is imposing in front of the welcoming Stickley rockers ready for sailors and a fish tale. Flanking the hearth are cases housing lovely silver race trophies dating back to the club's inception in 1905.

Members start filing in and talking about who will soon come in to enjoy an evening by the water before the annual Antique and Classic Boat Show tomorrow. Wooden Chris Craft boats with names like *The Sea-Quel*, *Mr. Benny*, *Idle-Vice*, *Life Is Good*, and *Camelot* will be on display and paraded about the mile-wide lake, and the club will be shown off to outside sailors. Held the last weekend in June, the show is one of the club's few events open to the public, and it draws entrants from across the country.

The club is a little like the bar on *Cheers*; everyone knows your name. They also know what you sail. From Memorial Day to Labor Day, members who live nearby spend their weekends here on E-Scows, Thistles, and A-class catamarans, docking just long enough for lunch on the porch or for dinner and dancing by the moonlit



**THIS PAGE:** Commodores Malanga and Heaton on an antique wooden canoe; Heaton's Uncle Charlie gets a visitor; and Heaton and friend Nicholas Aiello check out the boat show competition. **OPPOSITE:** Sam Hoagland III's boathouse with his antique boat.







lake at one of the club's balls.

"It must have been quite something," George Malanga, one of the three club commodores, says of the lake back in the 1930s, when large hotels, clubs, and restaurants permeated its shores and wealthy New Yorkers would flee the city for a taste of life on the water. Malanga spent summers with his family at the lake, and remembers taking his little boat to the Bertrand Island Amusement Park at night with friends. When he had his own children, he and his wife took full advantage of the yacht club. Here children can start sailing at age five in the Optimist fleet, and teenagers sail regularly on Friday nights in a Laser fleet.

Ask any club member his earliest memory of the lake and be prepared to hear a happy tale. Kenny Heaton, the club's rear commodore, remembers running off his dad's dock as a toddler, his father and grandfather jumping in after him. He has been drawn to the charms of the water ever since. In 2000 he and his wife bought a lake-front house from a former commodore's family. The only caveat of the purchase? "They said, 'You have to join the yacht club or we won't sell it to you,'" Heaton says. And so they did. "It is one of the best things we have done," he says. "The yacht club friends are the best we've had. It is like one big family here."

Although life here has remained much the same during the past century, the nine-mile-long lake has felt the winds of change in recent decades. The amusement park on Bertrand Island closed in 1986, and condominiums were put in its place. But the grande dame of a club and the premise of the sporting life with family is still intact and infuses the spirit of the people who come to enjoy Lake Hopatcong Yacht Club.

"I always think others are missing something," Malanga says of people who don't get to share the spoils of the lake, even if just for the summer months. "I think the joy of the water has an effect on people," he says with a twinkle in his eye. "We just have more of a positive outlook here."

**OPPOSITE:** The yacht club's dining room, set for dinner, enjoys lake views. The interior of the club was built in the Adirondack camp style.

**RIGHT:** Junior members enjoy the antique boat models; trophy cases dating back to the early 1900s chronicle the club's racing history; and the commodores en route to raising the flags and sounding the canon to begin the Antique and Classic Boat show.

