

## **Rear Commodore North America Annual report 2018**

It was a long winter in Canada this year with much of the ice taking longer to melt thus delaying an early start to our sailing season. But for those of us lucky and keen enough to get away, the fireball year started with a small group of boats attending the 52nd annual midwinter Fireball and Friends regatta in Tampa, Florida, followed in early April, with Clay Poulson hosting, the Fiesta del Sol regatta in Phoenix, Arizona. Only very devoted and intrepid sailors risk the often wintry, icy road conditions, and distances of 2300 to 2500 kilometres to escape winter for 3 days of sailing in a warm climate to then turn around and repeat the dreaded drive to get home. Clay in Arizona, Robert Thompson on Vancouver Island, Pat Crump in Tampa, Tom Egli in Montreal and myself, in Calgary, all have a spare boat available for anyone wanting to have the "rock star" experience of jetting in to the regatta event and stepping into a competitive boat. Some of these boats also serve as loaners to people who want to experience the fireball to help grow interest in the class.

The southwestern US held an event at Huntington Lake in mid July which attracted some new boats from the Los Angeles area. With much effort Clay managed to get a good turnout.

Two long time fireball sailors, Mark Cummings and Robert Thompson anchor the fleet on the west coast and have together built their own glass boats which are very fast. Rob and Iain McEvoy have collaborated in building centre boards and rudders with Iain designing and cutting and Rob glassing and finishing. These are competitive foils and of course very affordable. Rob kindly rebuilt my spare centreboard at no charge after it was damaged in my loaner boat. These acts go a long way to reinforce our commitment to keeping the class active and the always needed support.

Our Canadian Nationals will be in Montreal at Pointe Claire Yacht Club, the site of next year's Worlds. Our former Commodore, Joe Jospe, has taken on the organizing of this event and has things well in hand. The Montreal fleet continues to be the most active fleet in the country with active boats nearby in Ottawa. We are a small group in the West in Calgary and Edmonton but make the effort to drive the 3 hours each way to compete together and stay in touch. The core group of us have competed together for over 40 years.

With the next year's Worlds coming to Pointe Claire, we are already seeing interest and excitement from other sailors at the prospect of a world event in our own backyard and extend our warmest invitation to all Fireballers to come and experience a truly metropolitan city and great Canadian hospitality.

August 2018

Debbie Kirkby