

Hard A Lee

*An occasional newsletter of
The Wichita Falls Sailing Club*

February 8, 2026

Commodore's Corner

By Rip Medlinger, 2026 Commodore

Ahoy fellow sailors!

Believe it or not we are looking March right in the eye and that means we are close to the 2026 sailing season. There are some events coming up soon starting with our annual Fleet Race Schedule meeting on the 17th at the Women's Forum.

Our weather has been warm and sunny lately, perfect for some time on the lake!

Keep your ear to the rail to get more news about planned events coming soon!

Fair winds and following seas

Rip Medlinger, Commodore

2026 WFSC Board of Directors

Commodore: Rip Medlinger – 940/867-2550
Vice Commodore: Sandy Shawver – 940/704-3704
Rear Commodore: Derrick Christoff – 940/781-5856
Club Treasurer: Matt Baker – 940/923-7387
Club Secretary: Maja and Glen Spadin – 940/500-0478
Harbor Master: Bink Davidson - 940/782-6147
House Chair: ***Need a Volunteer - This could be you!***
Grounds: Steve Priester 781-7106 & Mike Gillis 867-3753
Racing Chair: Dave Brunner – 940/237-3334
Past Commodore: John Kidwell – 940/781-1310

First Sail of the Year: Ohmans Claim the Crown!

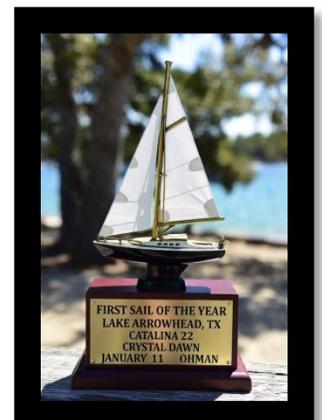
Ahoy, landlubbers and lake lovers! In the grand tradition of kicking off the sailing season with a splash (or at least a gentle ripple), we're thrilled to announce the winner of the First Sail of the Year Award.



Brandon Ohman sent in photographic proof that seals the deal: They took their trusty Catalina 22 out for a spin on a beautiful day with a blustery seven-knot wind whistling from the southwest. Brandon reports that his wife, Chrystal, stepped up to the helm like a pro and docked the boat with masterful skill. "I'm very proud of her," he says, "and she's beginning her love for sailing, which is a prayer answered." Christopher and Sophia were the extra deck hands learning the ropes. We hope to see 'em all during racing season!

Seven knots might not sound like a gale-force adventure, but hey, in our Frigid February, we'll take any excuse to unfurl the sails without turning into human icicles. Congrats to the Ohmans—may your winds stay fair and your docks always forgiving. If anyone else thinks they beat 'em to the water, pics or it didn't happen!

Brandon—We present you a pic of the finished trophy. Instructions: Please cut out the picture, (maybe run it through the Xerox a couple times to blow it up) frame and mount on the clinic wall to show off your spirit! The award itself was great looking when finished but we had to scavenge some of the futtocks and seaworthy cringles... Apologies!





Boats Weather the Storm, Moon Lights Up the Slips

If January's weather tried to turn Lake Arrowhead into a giant ice rink, our boats said, "Not today!" That fierce winter storm—dubbed "Fern" by some forecasters—rolled through North Texas around Jan 23-27, dumping sleet, freezing rain, and enough ice to make roads look like glass. Wichita Falls saw coatings of ice and snow, with temps plunging into the teens and wind chills even colder. Power outages hit hard across the region, and travel was, shall we say, an adventure best skipped.

But here's the good news: our fleet at the club held up like champs. No major damage to slips, hulls, or rigging reported—those sturdy lines and covers did their job. The boats fared well through the ice storm, proving once again that WFSC vessels are tougher than a Texan's resolve after a bad forecast.

And speaking of beauty after the beast... Brandon Ohman captured this stunning shot on Sunday, right at the full moon (aka the Snow Moon, fittingly enough). The moon rose, glowing over the slips, turning the water and masts into a postcard scene. Who says winter can't deliver a little magic? If this doesn't make you eager for warmer sails,

nothing will. Thanks for the pic, Brandon—proof that even after an ice storm, the lake still knows how to put on a show. Stay warm, check your boats, and here's to fair winds (and no more surprise sleet) ahead!

If you've got storm stories or more pics from the club, send 'em our way at sailing@wfsail.org (subject: "Hard A Lee"). We love sharing the highs (and surviving the lows) together.

WFSC Fleet Meeting – Tuesday, February 17 Time to Plot the Course for 2026!

The annual **Fleet Meeting** is coming up fast—**Tuesday evening, February 17**, at The Forum (2120 Speedway). (Doors on the east side – socialize starting around 6 p.m., snacks & soft drinks courtesy of the Club, BYOB welcome, then we get down to the important business of planning the 2026 racing season.)

This is your chance to:

- Help set the racing calendar
- Talk about rules (or suggest changes)
- Throw out ideas for new events or different ways to run the Flying Scot or Big Boat fleets
- Just come enjoy the company and get excited about the season!

Even if you don't currently race, come anyway. The food is good, the company is better, and you'll get to hear all the plotting, scheming, and occasional good-natured arguing that makes our racing season fun.

A few quick notes about the racing leadership team:

- **Dave Brunner** is holding down WFSC Fleet Captain duties
- **John Kidwell** continues as Big Boat fleet captain
- ***Flying Scot fleet is currently looking for a captain — You can volunteer!***
- **Deb Halter** is now Race Committee Chair (with Lee Havins, Glenn Tole, and Steve Priester rounding out the team) ...and we can always use more committee members!

One of the best things about being on the Race Committee? You get the **front-row seat** to all the action. The committee sets up right on the shoreline by the start/finish line — so you see **everything** — the brilliant tactical moves, the questionable decisions, the heroic comebacks... ..and of course all the sneaky little tricks, like “scarfing” (wagging the rudder back and forth trying to ghost forward when the wind is blowing 20 feet up in the air but zero down on the water).



Pro Tip: Feeling the itch to creep forward when the breeze dies? Scarf **SLOWLY**, my friend—the committee’s got US NAVY 20x binoculars locked on, and they never blink. You’ve been warned!

Oh — and one small tradition we might want to discuss... It’s been recommended that last year’s winners should get a special “handicap” for the next season. Nothing too serious... Maybe a little drag chute. ☺

Questions? Give **Dave Brunner** a call — he’s happy to talk racing, answer questions, or listen to your brilliant (or diabolical) ideas ahead of time.

Let’s get a great crowd out there next Tuesday night. Come help us plan another fun, fast, occasionally chaotic, always entertaining sailing season!

See you at The Forum! Bring your appetite, your opinions, and your sense of humor.

The Heart of WFSC: Our Roots in Volunteerism

Ever wonder why the Wichita Falls Sailing Club still feels like a true *club*—not some fancy marina or pay-to-play operation? It goes back to our beginnings in 1935, when a handful of local enthusiasts (including Charles P. Warman Jr., Perry Bass, Frank Pemberton, and Cleo Payne) banded together as the Wichita Falls Yacht Club on Lake Wichita. Back then, smack in the middle of the Depression, nobody had deep pockets for hired help or fancy facilities. They built boats in garages (hello, famous 1935 Snipe “Play Baby”), shared tools, organized races, and kept the whole show afloat through sheer elbow grease and shared passion.

Fast-forward through the decades: in 1973 we relocated to the bigger, better (albeit sometimes muddier) waters of Lake Arrowhead, changed the name to Wichita Falls Sailing Club, and built our current clubhouse, docks, and slips. But one thing never changed—the club runs on **volunteers**. From the elected Board of Directors and fleet captains to the hardworking committee members who set up races, the harbormaster keeping an eye on the slips, the grounds folks battling goatheads and mowing, the house chair fixing porches, building ramps, and hosting parties—it's all member-powered.

That's what makes WFSC special. No big staff payroll, no corporate overlords. Just us—members stepping up to paint, repair ramps, organize chili cook-offs, run sunset sails, and yes, even scrub the bottom of a boat or two. This volunteer spirit keeps our monthly dues incredibly low (even after that recent \$5 bump to cover rising lease and insurance costs, we're still at \$40/month—try finding that anywhere else). It means more money stays in the club for improvements, events, and keeping the lights on (and the boats floating).

Without volunteers, we'd either jack up dues sky-high or lose the laid-back, family-friendly vibe that draws people back year after year. Instead, we stay a real community: multi-generational, welcoming beginners and old salts alike, where pitching in is just part of the learning and fun. (And let's be honest—sometimes the best stories come from a work day gone slightly sideways.)

Here's the part that trips people up: **you don't have to be an expert to step up**. The positions—House Chair, Grounds Chair, Harbormaster, etc.—aren't about being the club's one-person fix-it crew. They're about **leadership** and **eyes on the water**. You spot the loose dock plank, the overgrown weed patch, the leaky faucet, or the wobbly finger pier, and you let the Board know. That's it. From there, a quick text or phone call rounds up the handy folks who actually enjoy swinging a hammer, mixing concrete, or rewiring a junction box. They show up, tools in hand, coffee in the other, and the job gets done. You don't need to know how to notch a keel, hammer horseshoes, or wire a J-box like a pro. The Board and the crew will figure out who's best for the heavy lifting. Your job is simply to care enough to notice and coordinate—which, in sailing terms, is exactly what a good skipper does: you don't have to trim every sail yourself, but you sure as heck better call the tacks and jibes so the boat keeps moving.

So next time you're out at the club, thank a volunteer. Better yet—become one! There's always room for more hands on deck. It's not just what keeps the prices low... it's what keeps us a club.

Fair winds and see you on the water (or at the next work day)!

2026 Social Calendar: Mark Your Calendars & Bring Your Appetite!

Spring is (finally) on the horizon, and that means it's time to dust off the coolers, check the playlist, and get ready for another year of good food, good company, and great excuses to be at the club. Here's the quick rundown of our 2026 social lineup—courtesy of Rear Commodore Derrick Christoff, who's already plotting ways to keep the fun flowing.

- **Saturday Morning Trim & Tune** – March Saturdays (exact dates TBD) Come out at 10 a.m. to tweak your boat, help a neighbor tune up, enjoy a little breakfast nosh, and shake off the winter cobwebs. Perfect low-pressure way to get back in the groove.
- **Kickoff Party / Chili Cook-off** – Late March or early April (date locked after the Fleet Meeting) Chili entries, judging, eating, margaritas (maybe), tunes blasting, and deck time under a spring sunset. No live band this year, but we'll crank the speakers and let the crowd provide the entertainment.
- **Friday Full Moon / Sunset Sails + Potluck** – Monthly all season One of our most popular traditions returns! Bring a dish to share (potluck starts ~7 p.m.), then either hop on a boat for the sunset sail or settle in on the deck to watch the full (or near-full) moon rise over the lake. Magical every time.
- **Open Sail** – Last Saturday in May No racing pressure—just show up, rig up, and sail. Great for beginners, rusty skippers, or anyone who wants a relaxed day on the water.

- **Independence Day Sail + Fireworks Extravaganza** – July 4th we pause regular racing in July (because Texas heat is no joke), but we'll still gather for a festive sail and the biggest light show on the lake. Bring your boat, your flag, and your appetite—millions of fireworks are hard to beat.
- **Hot Stuff Regatta** – July (usually 2nd Sat) our spicy mid-summer handicap race. Heat, wind, and bragging rights—plus plenty of cold drinks afterward.
- **Open Sail** – Last Saturday in August Another laid-back, no-stress sail day to close out the summer strong.
- **Harvest Winds Regatta** – October (typically 3rd Sat) Fall sailing at its finest—cooler temps, steady breezes, and usually some of the best racing of the year.
- **Christmas Party & Awards Night** – December The season finale: food, fellowship, prizes for the year's racers, and the traditional round of stories and laughs. Expect good eats, a few surprises, and the annual reminder that sailboats run on friendship (and maybe a little adult beverage).

Volunteers make it all happen Every one of these events needs helping hands—setting up, grilling, organizing potlucks, running skippers' meetings, cleaning up, you name it. If you'd like to jump in (even for just one event), reach out to Rear Commodore **Derrick Christoff**. He's the official Point of Contact for all party volunteering needs this year and will happily find you a spot that fits your schedule and skills.

So circle those dates, rally your crew, and let's make 2026 another year of memories on the water and laughs on the deck. The club is only as good as the people who show up—and we're counting on you.

Questions? Want to help? Call Derrick. See you soon!

Fair winds and full moons, Your Rear Commodore & the Social Committee

LAKE LEVEL UPDATE

If Lake Arrowhead were a glass of water, it'd be more than three-quarters full right now—specifically, sitting at a healthy 82.4 percent as of February 8, 2026. That's down just a smidge from earlier in the month (around 82.6% on Feb 1), but hey, who's complaining? Compared to this time last year (a meager 67.8%), or the year before that (56.1%), we're practically overflowing with good news. The lake's been on a steady rise thanks to decent rains over the past year, turning what was once "kayaking paradise" mode into prime sailing territory again. No more dodging exposed sandbars or pretending your rudder is a plow—though, let's be honest, some of our members have turned keels into serrated butter knives, notching them up like a gunslinger's belt (the unofficial "Three Notch Award" goes to Bink Davidson, with verification pending at Trim and Tune). Low water brings out the adventure in all of us!

For the sailors among us, the current elevation is 923.05 feet above sea level—that's about 2.95 feet below the full pool of 926 feet. Plenty of depth for those fixed keels, but plow through those shallow spots if you're feeling bold.

Speaking of weather, we all know it's the sacred "responsibility" of Commodore Rip Medlinger (Admiral Rip, if you please) to keep the skies cooperative—in jest, of course. During John Kidwell's tenure as Commodore back in 2024, the lake had its share of ups and downs: dipping below 65% by October (hello, drought watch), but bouncing back above 70% in spring with some timely rains. Subtle reminder: Steady is better than a rollercoaster, Rip—keep those rain dances coming!

Keep an eye on those levels, check your bilge pumps, and let's hope for fair winds (and just the right amount of rain). If the lake keeps this up, we'll be racing full fleets before you know it!

Full sails, Glen Spadin WFSC Secretary