

The RED EYE Regatta History

The Red Eye Regatta was conceived of by Pete Reinhart and fellow partiers at a 1975 New Years Eve party held at Arak Bozyan's home. There are unsubstantiated rumors liquor was involved, but the "rationale" now remembered for a race on new Years Day was as an alternative to watching football.

Regardless of the true rationale, the hard evidence is that on January 1st 1976 the first RED EYE Regatta was held, and was run by Pete from the comfort of his car positioned on the AYC point using his horn as the starting gun. That first race was a long distance race held in great weather conditions, scored under the MORC handicap rule and included about 20 boats. The complete participant list has not been found but the trophy evidence clearly shows Dennis Awbrey was the first winner. In addition to thinking it up and running the first race, Pete also donated the race trophy which included his artful attempt at engraving with a hammer and 10 penny nail. This trophy survives to this date and continues to be the smallest award ever made at the Austin Yacht Club (pictured below, yup that's a ruler and the cup is ~2" tall).

Within a few short years following the inaugural race the format was greatly enhanced by Hap McCollum through the addition of Bloody Mary's (courage extenders) and breakfast. For nearly 30 years Hap was the RED EYE guru, chief bar tender and chef for the now traditional Bloody Mary Breakfast. Hap was also always on the starting line for the race regardless of his sobriety or alertness, evidence of this is given by Trenton Wann who relates that during one RED EYE race he looked back at skipper Hap on the helm and found him fast asleep while driving to weather. In honor and memory of Hap, in 2007 the "McCollum Cup" was introduced and is awarded annually to the overall PHRF Spinnaker fleet winner of the RED EYE Regatta.

The RED EYE regatta has been held every year since 1976 and has been sailed in weather ranging from beautiful spring like days to freezing rain to dense fog. However with very few exceptions the weather has not stopped the race. Sailing RED EYE gives skippers and crew the bragging rights that their annual racing season starts on January 1.

First RED EYE Trophy (1976)



The "McCollum CUP"

