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F. Gregg Bemis

October 6, 1900 - February 12, 1995
Birthplace: Boston, Massachussetts

"There's a difference between rounding a mark and passing a mark."

Gregg Bemis, Harvard Class of '30, is one of the fathers of the modern day racing rules. In 1950, Bemis sat down with Harold Vanderbilt and Gerald Sambrooke-Sturgess and fine-tuned the rules Vanderbilt had been working on since the 1930s. Those rules went into effect in 1961, and for the first time ever the rules became identical wherever sailboats are raced.

Bemis was Chairman of the NAYRU appeals committee for many years, after which he became

Chairman of the NAYRU racing rules committee. He was also a senior international judge who served at the Olympics and the America's Cup. He was a judge long before US Sailing created a judging program. When faced with a difficult protest, Bemis would often take the devil's advocate position to help sharpen the focus of the other judges. "He was a keen thinker", says Cdr. Harry Anderson, who served on the Appeals Committee with Bemis for many years, "He was also a good sailor."

A three-time 210 national champion, Bemis brought many years of racing experience to the table when rules were being discussed and applied.

"Gregg Bemis was a judge at a regatta at MIT when I was at Yale," says Dave Perry, current Chair of US Sailing's Appeals Committee. "I screwed up my courage, introduced myself, and asked him a rules question. Forty-five minutes later he was still chatting with me and 10 other sailors who had gathered. His kindness and approachability made a deep impression."

Every four years after the Olympics, Bemis played a major role in updating the changes in the rules necessitated by innovative tactics. He authored *Learning the Racing Rules*, an oft-reprinted book that was required reading for sailors in the 1950s and 60s. Another of his books, *Yacht Race Scoring*, was the authority in its field.

At Bemis' funeral service several of his grandchildren gave eulogies. One granddaughter recalled a visit with the Bemises. Appearing for breakfast one morning, she found her grandfather pacing back and forth reading a copy of the racing rules. She said he turned to her and said, "You must remember, there's a difference between rounding a mark and passing a mark."

- Roger Vaughan

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