

# Corinthian Spirit

By Robert Porter Lynch © 2006

The Corinthian Spirit is the code through which we, as boaters, help each other, judge our actions, gauge our decisions on the water and docks, and conduct our relationships. The Corinthian Spirit guides us to helpfulness, cooperation, and mutual aid.



The Corinthian Spirit is a principle that all good boaters hold higher than any set of rules and regulations.

It is linked to the Mariner's General Prudential Rule (Principle) in maritime law states that a mariner may depart from any maritime rule in cases of extremity to avoid collisions or danger to human life.

A true Corinthian can be highly competitive, but will never endanger the safety of his or her crew members nor the vessel, nor other vessels.

## History

The idea of the Corinthian Spirit goes back to early Christianity with St. Paul's Gospels to the citizens of the seafaring town of Corinth. Paul urged them to love thy neighbor, to be friends, to cooperate together, to think and act graciously, and to help each other in danger.

The virtues of the Corinthian as a hearty and strong person of great character was reinforced in the Renaissance. Shakespeare (Henry IV Part 1) described young Prince Hal as "a Corinthian, a lad of mettle, a good boy."

The Corinthian skipper or sailor would always lend a good spirited helping hand to others, especially when danger placed someone's life in jeopardy. This meant taking precautionary measures to prevent accidents. If another ship needed help because it was sinking, aground, or its crew in danger, the Corinthian would provide assistance, even if it meant being late or assuming additional risk.

## Sportsmanship

Beginning early in the twentieth century, sailing, which had been dominated either by commercial fleets or rich racing enthusiasts, began opening up for a new class of sailor – the sportsman who was not wealthy, but loved sailing. Smaller racing designs pioneered by the *Star Class* (1910) or Nathaniel Herreshoff's *12 1/2* (1914) and *S-Boat* (1919) designs made sailing a popular sport, and are still sailed a century later. Many new designs emerged between 20' and 30' that were affordable, with great weather qualities.

As yachting evolved, two classes of yachtsmen emerged:

1. Those that were hard-driving, ruthless sailors who would do anything to win at all costs, including losing men at sea, poor safety, psychological manipulation, threats of flogging, and endangering other vessels.
2. Those that were competitive, but also balanced their drive to win with honor and caring for their crew, their ship, and for other skippers and their crew who might also be their competitors. These were "Good Sportsmen."

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In racing, the ruthless sailors would break the rules, find loopholes in the rules that could endanger others, act recklessly, and exercise command by fear and intimidation.

## Aran Islanders in Galway Bay:

"Them that fear not the sea will be drowned, for they will go out on a day when they shouldn't. But we who do fear the sea are only drowned only once in a distant while."

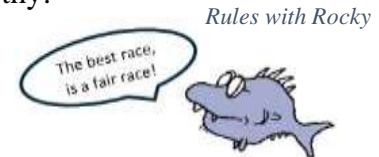
Corinthian sailors were just as competitive, but would only look for a loophole in the regulations if it did not jeopardize their ship or crew. Corinthian skippers would treat their crew with respect. There was an unwritten set of rules that Corinthian sailors would honor which embrace Good Sportsmanship. Sports writer Hugh Fullerton, writing at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century codified the "rules of engagement."

## TEN COMMANDMENTS OF A GOOD SPORT <sup>1</sup>

1. Thou shalt not quit.
2. Thou shalt not alibi.
3. Thou shalt not gloat over winning.
4. Thou shalt not sulk over losing.
5. Thou shalt not take unfair advantage.
6. Thou shalt not ask odds thou are unwilling to give.
7. Thou shalt always be willing to give opponent advantage of shade.
8. Thou shalt not underestimate an opponent, or overestimate thyself.
9. Remember the game is the thing, and he who thinks otherwise is a mucker, and no true sportsman.
10. Honor the game thou playest, for he who playeth the game straight and hard, wins even when he loses.

The US Sailing Association<sup>2</sup> provides "Corinthian Guidelines;" being a good sport on and off the water means being honest, respectful, and trustworthy:

1. Learn a new rule and follow it on the water
2. Don't yell at others
3. Thank the Race Committee after every finish
4. Don't stay angry if someone else fouls you
5. Avoid collisions even if you think you are right of way
6. Calmly admit to breaking a rule during a race and do a penalty turn
7. Speak positively to your coach and teammates
8. Congratulate a competitor
9. Thank everyone who helped you on land
10. Clean up all the trash in your area



The Corinthian Spirit also prevails on the docks. This is an excerpt from our Dockmaster Rules for my condominium at Harbour Lights, Naples, Florida.

<sup>1</sup> Found 1998 in the attic of the Pro Shop of the old Comstock Golf Course in Cranston RI. Probably written about 1920.

<sup>2</sup> Rules with Rocky -- [Rules with Rocky: Sportsmanship & The Racing Rules of Sailing - US Sailing](#)



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Our docks are essentially a part of our community. When you see or think another boater needs assistance with mooring lines, exiting or entering the docks, or might have a situation that could be dangerous, please take action and offer assistance. This is especially important under windy conditions when docking boats can become extremely difficult and potentially damage docks, boats, or worse: people. Think minutes in advance. Anticipate a problem before it happens. Keep the dock free and clear of clutter or lines that could trip people, etc. Keep extra lines available to throw to a boat needing to be secured in a storm. Be sure to double up all lines and put on chafing gear if storm warnings are raised.

The Corinthian Spirit elevates the game, brings out the best in others, and enables teamwork to win over those who compete only to fulfill the pride of their egos.

