

## The Origins of the Pacific Rim Yacht Challenge

*Edited from the Bellingham Yacht Club website*

A single vessel sailing across the Pacific from Russia to North America spawned a regatta that is now 20 years old, and many longstanding international friendships.

In 1988, Bellingham's Soviet Union sister city, Nakhodka, sent the 40-foot racing boat KAPITAN PANAEV ("Pan-eye-ev") to participate in local races and in the Swiftsure Classic. The visit resulted from a six-year negotiation by the sponsor, Bellingham Cold Storage, and a Whatcom County delegation. The boat and crew remained for six weeks.

Unfortunately, the Soviet boat suffered damage in a collision during pre-Swiftsure manoeuvring and could not participate in the race. Nonetheless, it was a very successful visit. The crew of seven under Captain Victor Bukhalsky made many good friends and thoroughly enjoyed their time in Bellingham. During an emotional farewell, the Soviet crew unanimously vowed to return, and invited a BYC boat to visit Nakhodka.

In 1989, the reciprocal visit occurred when eight yachtsmen, 12 teenagers, and three counsellors went to Nakhodka for three weeks of camping and racing. Then, in 1990, a group of youngsters from Nakhodka came to Washington State, to the Four Winds Camp on Orcas Island. Members of the Bellingham Yacht Club and the Bellingham Sister Cities organization felt that in light of participants from Japan and Russia being in Bellingham, a yacht race was a wonderful idea. This first race, named the International Pacific Rim Invitational Regatta (PRIR), put teams in donated boats for 'Round the Buoys' races, and long distance races from Bellingham to Victoria and Victoria to Seattle. Hosted events by members of the Bellingham Yacht Club, Royal Victoria Yacht Club, and Corinthian Yacht Club of Seattle enabled everyone to celebrate the differences in our cultures.

The sending of the Russian team was one of the first cultural exchanges under Gorbachev, and marked unprecedented cooperation between the US and Russia. The Russian training ship PALADA was docked in Seattle for the Goodwill Games, and its crew included the daughter of the skipper of the Russian team. The PRIR teams then escorted PALADA to Bellingham for a formal visit.

The success of this endeavour was so great, it was decided to repeat the event biannually, moving the venue from sister city to sister city. **The Pacific Rim Yacht Challenge** (PacRim) was formed. Countries represented now also include Australia and New Zealand. During the biannual event, participants travel to the hosting country and are accommodated in home stays. Typically, the event includes 5 days of racing, and social events specific to each city. Awards are presented, and gifts are exchanged. Everyone participating enjoys the friendships created. The regatta charter allows 20 people (crew and ambassadors) from each country to attend. Including the host organizers and volunteers, several hundred people participate in the event.

**2008 Tateyama, Japan** – Yamaha 30

**2006 Tauranga, New Zealand** – Farr 38

**2004 Nakhodka, Russia** – Cetus Design 45' Full Head Rig Sloop

**2002 Bellingham, USA** - J36

**2000 Port Stephens, Australia** – J24

**1998 Victoria, Canada**

**1996 Tauranga, New Zealand**

**1994 Tateyama, Japan**

**1992 Port Stephens, Australia**

**1990 Bellingham, USA**