

Doc Gilbert Potomac Cup
Potomac Sailing Association – Fleet 50
Washington, DC
May 3–4, 2004

Pos	Sail#	Skipper	Crew	Fleet	R1	R2	R3	Total
1	14855	Dick Hallagan	Lori Foster / Alister Thomson	77	2	1	1	4
2	14942	Dick Moyer	Helen Moyer / Doug Pierce	228	4	2	2	8
3	14941	Pierce Barden	Josh Crosby / Doug Sherwood	511	3	5	8	16
4	15101	Todd Johnson	Cathy Bleakly / Katie Offerman	329	5	9	6	20
5	14277	Eric Beck	Matt Beck / Gary Schneiderman	75	13	3	5	21
6	14217	Drew Hudson	Sousan Arefeh / Tony Vernon	50	1	10	11	22
7	14096	Nabeel Alsalam	Russ Roberts / Scott Bradford	50	6	12	4	22
8	14485	Ron Buchanan		509	11	7	7	25
9	14968	Byrne O'Brien	Karen O'Brien / Ed Seyerlein	484	12	6	9	27
10	14395	Jeff Storck	Craig Huzway / Cathy Feig	50	10	16	3	29
11	14902	Carol Park	Bill Remorenko / Mike Guion	253	14	4	17	35
12	14566	Frank Gallagher	Lolita Hart / Skip Hirsch	50	7	18	10	35
13	14932	John Pelosi	Harold Broadwell / Gene Prather	481	8	11	16	35
14	15101X	Pat McGee	Paul Maher / Ian MacLeod	50	9	20	14	43
15	7603	Bob Astrove	Scott Graham / Elizabeth Morris	50	23	15	13	51
16	14627	Nelson Pemberton	Christy Dillard / Craig Finster	50	16	13	23	52
17	15118	Star Mikell	Joe Deerin / Justin Morris	253	24	17	12	53
18	15141	Avis Bridgers	Henry Bridgers / Dan Slone	481	20	19	15	54
19	11767	Harry Keith	Henry Keith / Donna Cohen	50	15	21	21	57
20	14449	Chandler Owen	Emily Tant / Tanya Topolewski	50	32/DNF	8	18	58
21	14363	Larry Decker	Jan Crittenden / Mark Keane	75	19	22	20	61
22	14527	Rick Welch	Jennifer Parrow / James Easter	50	20	14	28	64
23	14266	Dave Pyle	Carolyn Pyle / Dave Chiquiunic	511	21	24	19	64
24	14592	Ben Good	Jill Williamson / Hayden Smith	50	18	23	25	66
25	14156	Red Ferhle	Amy Wiggins /	50	27	26	24	77
26	14521	Joe Anderson	Dan Parietti /	50	25	27	26	78
27	14555	Joe Warren	John Hart /	50	26	25	27	78
28	10745	David Thompson	Barbara Thompson / Susan Nickbarg	50	29	29	22	80
29	14525	John Bates	Matt Potbin / Jim Smekle	253	17	32/DNF	32/DNF	81
30	13306	Laurie Duncan	Kris Swanson / Maryann Gallagher	50	28	28	29	85
31	10643	Ted Okada	Neil Eggleston / Margaret Zeigler	50	30	32/DNF	32/DNF	94

Potomac Cup – Tanya Topolewski

do not know Doc Gilbert. Never met the man, but I know of him now through the legacy of his boat, his crew, and a set of experiences in the 2003 Potomac Cup that he surely must have had a hand in. I am new to the Washington Sailing Club. However, after two trips on a Lightning, I told Joe Warren “sign me up for both days of the Potomac Cup with a skipper who will sail when it’s screaming wind” and I got the honor of sailing on the Lord Jim with Chandler Owen at the helm.

On race day, I introduced myself to Chandler while he was rummaging in his van which runneth over with sailing gear. He promptly handed a file to scrape some lumps off the bottom fin of the boat and my crew mate, Emily, was busy electrical taping every shroud shackle in sight. Chandler was checking line settings, wondering about unfamiliar rigging set ups, randomly musing about the condition of equipment, and generally attacking the Lord Jim’s boat rigging with a vengeance. His mantra: every little item makes a difference in sailing. He was on an unrelenting quest to improve the boats sailing performance.

However, the trailer was lagging in the performance department. On the thirty mile drive to the regatta, the old trailer had nearly given up the ghost and was nearly bending in half at some rusted out locations. Chandler finished the trailer off with his fly weight while rigging the boat, and it went “thud” as the stern bottom hit the asphalt. This caused Chandler to scratch his head. Then he rummaged in the van and appeared with an old spinnaker pole, a random galvanized object and duct tape. Sister the poles to the trailer, tape it up and -voila! Trailer good as new.

When the Lord Jim ready to sail, Chandler was not in the mood to wait for a hoist. I knew I was in trouble when we were at the launch ramp and he handed me the bow line and said “Run!” I looked back as he was shoving the trailer down the boat ramp at top speed. Emily ducked as I ran past her with the bow line and in two seconds flat, the trailer crashes into the water and the Lord Jim does a splash down, floats free and agreeably spins her bow toward the end of the dock. Our 5 second flying boat launch was impressive to all around. Emily and I just stood on the dock with “yes, we meant to do that” poses.

After sailing out to the worlds longest start line, the race begins and we are on our first beat. BOOM! our main drops like a limp rag. Most other boats have vague memories of some idiot climbing a mast to the spreaders; yes, that was the Lord Jim. After this quick diagnosis shimmy, and the realization that having the skipper up the mast was most likely to cause a serious Chandler smack down, he proposed the next best thing—we would lay the Lightning on its side and he would be in the water to retie a line to the main. Yes, folks, we were hell bent on intentionally capsizing our boat in the middle of the race.

Emily and I were all for this. Sure, we can just roll Lord Jim over, and then climb to the centerboard—we wouldn’t even get wet! No problem! For those of you who have never intentionally tried to capsize a Lightning, let me tell you—it’s hard to do. Emily and I had to nearly hang off the port side to induce a roll, and with the Lightings wide beam we swimming before you could say “bad idea!” With Emily and I flailing, the Lord Jim proceeded to turtle until the mast got stuck in the mud. This is not part of our brilliant plan, and when we couldn’t quite manage tying a new line to the main, we righted the boat.

Funny, the race committee didn’t immediately send a crash boat out to the lunatics who capsized their own boat. They eventually did and we got a tow to the dock. Bailing like mad, our bucket rebelled and shredded itself into a nearly unfunctional bucket-like object with dagger sharp edges. We found much of it floating back by the transom as we got to the dock as we could not bail the boat to any more with it.

Next plan: we’ll turn the boat on it’s side on the trailer for the repair. Remember the high quality trailer we were dealing with? We didn’t. We rebroke the braced the trailer as we bent the support poles to the ground trying to get our unbailed boat out of the water. We “liberated” someone else’s trailer a proceeded with the repair. We tried hard to clean the mast and sails. It turns out Chandler had “borrowed” these pretty darn new, white, crisp sails without really letting the owner know—really, they look better with a little mud. We changed our clothes and let me tell you, there is no better sailing bonding moment than seeing your skipper in his boxers.

We relaunched the boat and as the wind catches the Lord Jim and swings it around, Emily and I watch dumbfounded as the bow line knot slips away as if it had never been tied. There went the Lord Jim floating free and heading right for a brand new speedboat in the other launch. As I am shouting “NOOOOOOOO!” with my empty bow line waving in the breeze, I have still have a vision of Emily’s feet as she completes her head first dive into the water to catch the runaway Lord Jim.

So that was our first race on the Lord Jim in the 2003 Potomac Cup. As we told this story other sailors shared many other Doc Gilbert tales. I think this story is a continuation of his life as a never-say-die sailor who thoroughly and enthusiastically solved problems in any manner that was (and perhaps wasn’t) appropriate. Sometimes these solutions worked, sometimes they didn’t, but working or not wasn’t the point, doing and trying was the point, the lesson, and the fun of sailing. Like I said, I never met the Doc Gilbert, but I think I sailed with him throwing curveballs at myself, Chandler and Emily, and I am all the richer for having learned a small part of his lessons.