

SCYA and the 1932 Los Angeles Olympic Games

By: F. Daniel Somrack



**On The Cover & Above - Admiral Albert Soiland M.D.
The first Commodore of SCYA stands as Dick Deadeye in the
1936 opening of Newport Harbor**

1921: Realizing a Dream

When Admiral Albert Soiland, M.D., Dean of the West Coast Corinthians, formed the Southern California Yachting Association in 1921 he wanted to bring together California yachtsmen for friendly competitions and provide a framework of standards by which these contests could be followed.

More importantly, Dr. Soiland wanted to establish Southern California as the world's yachting center. He invited yachting club members from Santa Barbara San Diego, together with sailors from Newport and Los Angeles to join the SCYA for the purpose of correlating their work and interests.

As the first Commodore of SCYA, Admiral Soiland had the foresight to prepare west coast sailors for the opportunity of hosting the 1932 Olympic Summer Games by placing SCYA in a dominant position to control the event. Additionally, the formation of the SCYA greatly increased America's chances of Olympic success should Los Angeles win the bid to host.

Although yachting had been an Olympic sport since the first Olympiad at Athens, Greece in 1896, the U.S.A. had yet to medal in the event. France, Italy, Norway and Sweden dominated yachting competitions around the world.

The formation of the SCYA evened the playing field.

The Birth of the Snowbird

After sailing abroad for a year, SCYA's Vice-Commodore and 1928 Olympic competitor Owen P. Churchill returned to Los Angeles and cautioned, "All of Europe is eyeing up the Southern California yachting situation at the present time. Especially on the monotype, there was all kinds of competition in that division in the last Olympics." IT was time for action, and Churchill looked to the North American Yacht Racing Union for help.

Once the NAYRU gave its consent, the Olympic committee selected the monotype. As a dinghy relatively unknown in U.S. waters, the "Snowbird" was agreed upon and an entire fleet of snowbirds built by the U.S for the '32 Games.

The snowbird replaced the Twelve-Voetsol monotype as a single-handed dinghy. Churchill designed the re-rigged boat by lengthening the mast from fifteen feet to seventeen feet-six inches and shortening the boom to give the corresponding sail area of about ninety-five feet. A hollow mast was used which was lighter and much stronger. His efforts seemed fruitless when, in the Olympic trials (?), all three medals went to the Europeans!