

# Stay Out Of AMYA Business!

*An editorial by Joe Walter, AMYA #10985*

“Stay out of AMYA business!” came the order. Momentarily shocked by the command, I struggled at first to understand why this volley was aimed at me. I was not aware I was “in” AMYA business at the time. What did I say or do to deserve such a reprimand? Finding no reason to defend myself, I simply replied, “I’m not.”

Before I tell you who gave this order, let’s first look at the meaning of it. As voting members of this Association aren’t we all involved in the business of AMYA? Do we not elect its leaders? Are the elected not suppose to serve the needs of the members? If a member has a question or complaint, are they not allowed to approach the leadership for answers?

It seems to me that we all have a right to be involved in AMYA business as dues paying members. Maybe not to the degree that we should get into the daily requirements of running the organization, but certainly to the extent that we should all be informed of important decisions being made by the leadership as they relate to the future of the AMYA, and be allowed to voice our concerns.

When this order came, I was confused. I was also preoccupied with other thoughts and with competing in a regatta at the time and so did not give it much pause. But later, as I began to think about it more, it made me wonder why this person would say this. As I wondered more about its meaning and then about the person who said it, it made me angry. Angry because the person who gave this order to me was Chuck Buzek, the Vice President of AMYA.

The Vice President of my Association, and all of yours as well, was ordering me to “Stay out of AMYA business!” This elected official was telling a voting member to mind his own business. Think about that if you will. On the one hand he wants me to vote for him to get into office, but on the other hand, do not question him or the other leaders. AMYA is theirs to run. It is for them only to control and direct. And all of us are only there to give them a vote and then retreat to the lakeside to sail our toy boats. Eyes on the water. Never to question. Speak when spoken to. That is the meaning behind the command, “Stay out of AMYA business!”

In that instant, these five little words from Chuck’s mouth made it clear to me that AMYA was not what I thought. It was not the social club for like-minded toy boat sailors. It was not the governing body of American Model Yachting. It was nothing more than the smoke filled parlor of elitists. For 37 years our votes have never really been needed. To gain access to the parlor you had to be invited by the previous administration. Once invited you are sworn in and held to a code. I am not sure if there is a hazing ritual, but there surely is a black list for anyone who breaks the code. Just ask Phil Geren, past Treasurer whose character has been trashed in the pages of *Model Yachting* and on the Internet by both current and past officers of AMYA.

Mr. Geren voiced his concerns about the budget deficits and past failures to file tax statements. For this, his term in office was cut short by a technicality of the by-laws and his good name dragged through the mud as they blamed him for the deficits. Never mind that AMYA began running up the deficits four years before Phil took office. He dared to speak his mind and get “into AMYA business.”

So now for the first time in the history of this Association, we have two names on the ballot for President of AMYA. And not just for President, but for Vice President, Treasure, and a number of director spots as well. For the first time in 37 years of AMYA, the membership will have a choice in leadership. For the first time, YOU all will have a chance to let your voice be heard. You will select your leaders instead of just checking an approval box of the leaders someone else selected for you.

And what has been the reaction from the smoking parlor on this new opportunity for its members? The reaction has been to attack the character of Rick West, Ken Shaw, and Phil Geren. They have begun a campaign to destroy their good names and to label their intentions towards public services as a “Megalomaniacal power grab.”

How can it be that the service of the current and past officers of AMYA has been selfless, noble, and single-mindedly focused towards serving the membership, BUT when others offer to serve, they are instantly labeled a megalomaniac, tin horn, and dictator? “Megalomaniacal?” Really? Volunteering to run for office of a toy boat club hardly seems like the steppingstone to World Domination. Why so much vitriol? Was it because Mr. West was not invited into the parlor first? Why so much effort to demonize these good people? Are their titles so important to them or is there something to be found if the smoke is cleared from the parlor?

AMYA is the organization that brings all of us model sailors together in social and competitive endeavor. It is the governing body of our sport and is vital to the future growth of the sport. The officers are elected to represent its membership to other national and international organizations, ensuring that we are recognized and valued members of the sailing community. With the exception of the Membership Secretary, it is an all volunteer organization. It is supported by hundreds of dedicated men and women, who volunteer to run regattas, organize events, keep their club and class members informed through emails, phone calls, or the Internet. It is the tremendous work done by John Davis and his staff at *Model Yachting* to bring us all the great articles on model building and sailing and keep us informed.

AMYA is an organization of folks giving their time and energy to promote the sport and hobby and to keep folks coming back to the ponds and lakes to share in the fun. So someone please tell me why it is a bad thing when a small group of hard working, dedicated individuals step up to offer their time, energy, and resources to support AMYA. Why should anyone who offers to help out, to serve, or to run for office be attacked in the manner that these men have been?

Rick West has been a great Class Secretary for the EC12 class. He has led the class to unprecedented growth, both in the number of new members and the turnouts at regattas. He travels the country going to more regattas each year than just about anyone in any class. While traveling, he makes a point of getting to know as many people in the sailing community as he can and he listens to them. His decision to run for office was based on the things he was hearing from all the people he met at regattas. He is not looking for power. He has simply stated that these are the things he can bring to the table. These are the things he can do for AMYA and if you elect him, he will do his best to get them done and hopefully bring some much needed improvements to AMYA.

So it is up to all of you now. You can sit back and listen to remarks of a handful of men behind the smoke, or you can read for yourself the plans for AMYA that Rick and his team have stated they will do. You can email or call Rick yourself and ask him your questions and he will listen to you and give you straightforward answers. You can think about what you want out of AMYA and decide for yourself if you want to continue with the status quo or look forward to what these new people have to offer. And then you can vote your mind.

Either way, win or lose, this election is good for AMYA. Having a choice in who will lead your AMYA is essential to the health of the organization. This election, regardless of who wins, will strengthen AMYA. It will encourage more people to give of their time and it will help the leaders understand better the needs and wants of its members. This election should be embraced by the current administration, not shunned.

It has been almost a year since Vice President Chuck Buzek told me to “Stay out of AMYA business!” I would like to revise my answer to him. Mr. Buzek, I AM AMYA BUSINESS! All of the members are AMYA business and none of us should stay out of that business.