**Excerpts from *Robert N. Bavier, Sr.: A Sailing Pioneer*, by Kelsey Donald:**

*On the 1930 America’s Cup Trials:*

The next summer [1929] was one of the most intense seasons of Bob’s entire racing career.  He was approached by Junius S. Morgan, grandson of J. P. Morgan and Commodore of the New York Yacht Club, to devote his summer to the defense of the America’s Cup.  Bob agreed and fully dedicated himself to the task, selling his boat *MAB*, as well as a six meter he was in the process of building, in order to put all of his focus on the Cup and the boat Junius selected to try for it.

The yacht in question was a sleek J-boat; she was over 126 feet long and more than 150 feet high.  She was designed by Clinton Crane and skippered by Junius Morgan’s brother-in-law, George Nichols.  Her name was *Weetamoe*.

*Weetamoe* was named after a female Pocasset Wampanoag Native American Chief.  A captive once wrote of Chief Weetamoe, “A severe and proud dame she was.”  This sentiment could be aptly applied to *Weetamoe* as she contended fiercely in the 1930 America’s Cup trials.

Alongside skipper George Nichols, Bob served in *Weetamoe’s* afterguard as tactician.  They were up against a respectable assortment of other contenders: *Whirlwind, Yankee,* and *Enterprise.*  Though it became apparent early on that *Whirlwind* was out of her league, the other two boats ran a tight race with *Weetamoe* throughout the trials.

Drama unfolded on and off deck—as the world watched *Weetamoe* and *Enterprise* both perform spectacularly, opinions were split over which of the two should be selected to defend the Cup.  Protests were filed after the race results were deemed unsatisfactory to some, and arguments were made over which boat performed better in certain conditions, and which skipper had the better temperament to lead his crew. *Yankee*, in good spirit, picked up third place throughout many of the trials.

Bob Sr. had asked George Nichols if he could bring his son along for a fleet race in Buzzards Bay during the New York Yacht Club cruise.    *Enterprise*, *Yankee*, and *Whirlwind* also competed that day.  Robert Jr. later wrote about that sail in Yachting magazine.  “At the age of 12, I was too short or *Weetamoe’s* wheel was too tall for me to see above its rim.  I stood behind it, grabbed the inner spokes, peered between them and turned the wheel slowly.  The huge J boat responded, bore off gracefully onto a close reach and sped for the harbor at 12 knots while her crew of 30 hands and four in the afterguard watched with bemused and friendly smiles.”  Bob Jr.’s time at the helm was a small foreshadowing to the year 1964, when he would skipper the 12-meter *Constellation* to an overwhelming victory in that year’s America’s Cup.

Ultimately, *Enterprise* was chosen by the committee over *Weetamoe* for her results in the trials and her superior ability to perform in all conditions.  *Enterprise* had finished first in 13 out of 23 starts, and *Weetamoe* had finished first on 11 out of 20 starts—she’d also had two disqualifications and one man overboard.

Despite the judging of the committee, a number of sailors still believed *Weetamoe* to be the superior boat.  Some rationed that George Nichols, though an able sailor, paled in comparison to Enterprise’s Harold S. Vanderbilt, an effective crew manager and team builder.  Nevertheless, *Enterprise* went on to sail in and win the 1930 America’s Cup.

Years later, Bob Jr. commented, “In the modern era a syndicate would probably have switched skippers when *Weetamoe* began to lose.”  Bob Jr. himself had been in a similar situation; in 1964 he was elevated to skipper and won the America’s Cup, and in 1974, when he began to lose, he was replaced by another skipper.  “That was simply not done in those days,” he went on, speculating on *Weetamoe’s* chances for the Cup.  “Had it been, my dad would have been the logical choice.  Yes, I am prejudiced, but I also know he was a superb helmsman and an instinctively great sailor.  I am confident that in his hands *Weetamoe* would have won.”

*On the Bermuda Race:*

It was no coincidence that Bob was the first skipper to win the Bermuda Race in both a Herreshoff-designed boat, *Memory*, in 1924, and an Olin-Stephens – designed boat, *Edlu,* in 1934.  Bob Bavier, Sr. recognized greatness; both designers were, arguably, among the best sailboat designers of their generation, if not all time, and Bob was among those who were immediately drawn to their beautiful (and fast) designs.

Bob left his Bermuda Racing career with many accolades to show for it.  He had been the first to race and win in a Marconi-rigged boat, and he’d been the first to race and win in a sloop.  Bob was the first and only skipper to have three first-to-finish wins in a row, in the 1923, 1924, and 1926 races.  He was also the first owner to build a boat specifically to the Bermuda Race rating rule (*Dragoon*, 1926).  Finally, Bob achieved the record of being the first skipper to win five major race trophies (first to finish or first overall).