



# The Potter Yachter

Newsletter of the Northern California West Wight Potter Club

April 2007

## Sailing & Event Calendar

April 14, Oakland Estuary Day Sail, launch at Grand St. Alameda. Sail Host, Bruce Hood

April 18 & 22, Strictly Sail, Jack London Square, Oakland.

May 12 & 13, Delta Cruise, Overnight, Brannon Island to Lundborg Landing. Sail Host, Jerry Barrilleaux

June 2 & 3, Woodward Annual Campout, near Oakdale, CA. Sail Host, Rich McDevitt

June 24 & 25, Eagle Lake Campout, near Susanville, CA. Sail Host, Dave White

July 15, Richmond Day Sail, to Loch Loman

July 28 & 29, Cruiser Challenge VIII, Monterey. Annual fun race/social Weekend, sponsored by PotterYachters and MPYC.

August 18, Richmond Day Sail, Angel Island Circumnavigation. Sail Host, Don Person

Sept 4 to 20, Usual Suspects to Pacific Northwest. Recommended for experienced trailer/sailors. Sail Host, Dick Herman

Sept 9, Delta Day Sail B&W Marina to Korth's

Sept 29 & 30, Tomales Bay weekend. Sail Host, Eric Zilbert

Oct 13 & 14, Monterey Overnighter. Sail Host, Mike Swartz

Nov 3, Richmond Day Sail. Sail Host, Dave Meredith

## Sailing Lake Del Valle

by Rich McDevitt

Ahh, Del Valle, my much maligned friend. This is where I cut my teeth learning how to sail in 1985 on a Capri 13. It is also the site of the first Potter Yachter organized sail in 1978 and the only place I ever came close to laying my P-19 on her side. I was not paying attention and got slammed with a stiff gust. Lake Del Valle is a special place to me with many memories of sailing, sun, fun, nature, and a couple bee stings. It has also seen more than one Potter show her keel to the sky. While having lunch with the Wednesday Grand Avenue sailing group I mentioned to a few guys that live in Livermore and Pleasanton, that Del Valle can be a wonderful sail in the spring and summer months if you know how to sail the lake. Don Person suggested I put it in writing and share with the club so here is my perspective on how to sail Lake Del Valle.



Pat Malone and *Festina Lente*

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## The Commodore's Log

A lot has been happening and the weekend of March 16-18 was a hotbed of activity. First, John Wheeler conned a group of the unsuspecting to gather at Santa Cruz for a cruise to Moss Landing. I hope someone writes that one up for the newsletter. Then Jerry Kergan, who sails the only cutter rigged P-15 in captivity, discovered just how wet and wild San Francisco Bay can be. He tells it all on his website, [www.lazyka.com](http://www.lazyka.com). It is a saga worth reading. Go to his website, click on "Log of Lazy Ka" and scroll down to 18 Mar 2007 on the calendars on the left side. "Kergan's Law" is alive and well. There are lessons to be learned and Jerry shared them.

By all reports, the day sail to the wreck of the USS Thompson out of Redwood City went well. Dave Kautz always does an excellent job as sail host and I hope

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## The Captain's Locker

By Dick Herman

Got a tidbit about sailing you'd like to share? This is the place. It doesn't matter what it is, somewhere you've sailed, a technique you've learned the hard way, or just something neat. Write up a paragraph or two and send it along

### That Time of Year

It's raining. It's cold. And Muddy Duck just sits beside the garage waiting patiently. I've checked the wheel bearings, pumped up the tires, and rewired the lights on the trailer. The trusty outboard is back from the shop where it had its first complete service in four years, and there is nothing nautical on the TV. So what does a Potterite do to while away the time? Then I had a flash. Get intellectual and read something! How About Rules of the Road? I hadn't thought about those since the last Cruiser Challenge.

So who does have the right of way? Well, the first rule is to do whatever it takes to avoid a collision. Okay, that helps. The international rules of the road are more helpful and establish a priority to **Nuc Restricted Fish**. Save the whales aside, that means vessels **Not Under Command** have first priority, then vessels **Restricted** by their size or ability to maneuver come next, and vessels engaged in commercial **Fishing** are third. Sailboats come next, but only when they are **On The Water**. **O** means the boat (power or sail) being **Overtaken** has the right of way. After that, **T** for tack applies. I think **SOP**, standard operating procedures, for **Starboard tack Over Port** tack. Finally, **W** is for wind. I think wind is the **LOW** man on the totem pole, or the **Leeward** boat has the right of way **Over** the **Windward** boat.

Sadly, a Potter becomes a stinkpotter the moment the captain engages the outboard, and gas-guzzlers must yield the right of way to sailboats (unless, of course, the sailboat is overtaking the powerboat). Now don't be stupid about this. The basic laws of physics still apply and the big guy always wins in a collision. When powerboats go at it among themselves, the boat on the right, or starboard, has the right away.

Okay, this is simpleminded and can be nitpicked on details. But it will keep you out of lawsuits as long as you remember the first rule, which is to do whatever it takes to avoid a collision. So sail safe, keep the people in the boat, the water out of the boat, and don't embarrass the boat.

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**Sailing Lake Del Valle** (Continued from page 1)

Del Valle is managed by the East Bay Regional Parks District and is located south of Livermore's expanding wine country. The fees are something like \$6.00 for a car and \$4.00 for a boat launch. Ask for a map of the lake at the entrance kiosk. The hills surrounding the lake are steep and covered with oak and grasses. Spring generally finds the lake full and post Labor Day you should call before heading out as the water level is usually down by then. The entire lake has a speed limit that is enforced, I think its 10 MPH. The means, no PWC's! You will encounter a lot of fishermen and some rental boats (kayaks and small fishing boats). This is quite a popular lake for kayaking. There is ample parking, a nice launch ramp (watch out for the mast eating tree branches on the northern most ramp lane closest to the marina), restrooms, a small marina store, beaches, bbq's, and picnic areas, all of this around the northern area of the lake.

I tend to think of Del Valle as three separate sailing areas, the northeast area, where you find the launch ramps and all the amenities mentioned above, the central area known as Swallow Bay, and the southern end by the dam known as Heron Bay. Each of these areas is connected by narrows and that is generally where people have difficulty. There is a "testosterone contest" of sailing from the launch ramp to the dam but it can be quite difficult and some days it is more prudent to motor through the narrows from one bay to another. Heron and Swallow bay provide the biggest open areas for sailing and quite a few small coves exist along the entire shoreline. Anchoring can be difficult as the lake is deep in most areas with steep sloping shores. I have spent many an afternoon with the Minnow parked under the shade of a mighty oak with a small line holding me to a tree root as I am parallel to the shore. Watch the tree limbs overhead and the rocks below but there are a lot of opportunities for napping. Some of the coves have areas friendly to beaching the boat and taking a hike or relaxing on shore. The northern end provides a fantastic beam reach on summer days just to the northeast of the launch area. It can be like sailing in a mini slot

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**Quiet Thunder, Lady Washington and Hawaiian Chieftain**

On a quiet day in Redwood City there was the sound of thunder coming from the bay. For a small group of Potters, and other boaters it was a day to sail with the two replica tall ships, the Lady Washington and the Hawaiian Chieftain. With hardly enough wind to blow out a birthday candle we zig zagged out Redwood Creek channel toward the bay. When the Lady Washington and the Hawaiian Chieftain motored pasted us, we headed for shallow water.

The gun fire was thunderous with each ship firing its cannons. As we watched they maneuvered with the wind to get the other in a position to make that fatal shot, but neither was damaged.

As the picture shows Mike Swartz has put *Burgundy Splash* in a precarious position sailing between the Tall Ships. He is no match to tall ships when it comes to sail area or cannon power.



Photo by Rob Sampson



*Sailing Lake Del Valle (Continued from page 3)*

only no fog and the air is warm. Winds can range from non existent to 25 knots or more and that can happen in a couple hours. Wind directions vary at different times of the year but generally speaking come from the south west. However, like many inland lakes, the terrain surrounding the lake has a dramatic effect on wind velocity, direction, and frequency. Watch for cat's paws on the water, watch the trees and the hills, and pay attention to the canyons. Complacency can get you in trouble here. If you have any doubt, put a reef in early and don't even think about cleating your mainsheet. The wind speed and direction is frequently different in the center of a bay or narrow than it is along the shoreline and thus some of the difficulty sailing from the ramp to the dam. Its good practice but you can sail in circles for a while also. If you are a frequent bay sailor you can probably handle higher winds and waves but it is the shifting nature of reservoir sailing that you will find challenging. Telltales and vanes help but a better bet is learning how to sense the shifting wind pressures on you cheeks and neck.

Del Valle is home to a lot of small game, deer are abundant, raccoons, lots of bird watching, once in a while you can find nesting eagles, and on the summer weekends lot of extremely wild homo sapiens on the north west beaches (that's the beauty of owning a boat, you can find peace even on a crowded day) and yes, a few bees and bugs along with the turtles and frogs.

I like to arrive early, 9 AM or so, get in my sail, and pull the boat by 3 PM. You can sail later but in the summer the winds really scream in the



Harry Gordon and *Manatee*

late afternoon. If you launch early and the wind is not up yet, motor down towards the dam and find a place to pull in, kick back, and enjoy

Share your stories with everyone, whether it is a scheduled event or impromptu day sail. There are always things of interest that happen when you are on the water, from the weather to the scenery. Maybe you want to write about "cans" and "nuns" or salvage rights, you must have something to share.

This is your newsletter. You may use other communication venues for day to day things, but the pages of this newsletter are to share your adventures, and news with the largest audience. *Editor*

nature or clean your boat a bit until the wind picks up. It's not a trip across the bay or to Catalina, but Del Valle does provide on most days, a pleasant uncrowded place to enjoy life at a slower pace. If you come out midweek, you will be almost alone on the lake. It can get hot in the summer, upper 90's and 100 degrees is not uncommon. When you pull your boat enjoy getting a little wet after all, its fresh water and a little moisture will feel good as you get the boat ready for the road. The parking lot is pretty sunny so a quick dip in the lake is a nice treat in the summer before you head home.

Pack a picnic lunch, bring some sunscreen, a swim suit and put Del Valle on your list of things to do this year. Clean fresh water and beautiful wildlife filled shorelines await you and your boat will probably appreciate a good rinsing off of the salt water she usually sails on. Pay attention to the wind, terrain, and other boats and I think you will leave relaxed with a smile and pleasant memory of your day. Before you head out, post on Trailer Sailor and if I'm around, I'll take the Minnow out and join you.

The Commodore's Log (Continued from page 1)

someone has a few words for the newsletter.

April is looking good with a day sail on the Oakland Estuary on Saturday, April 14 hosted by Bruce Hood. While not a Potter event, Strictly Sail is scheduled for 18 to 22 April. Last year, the Potters were out in force and did an impromptu sail-by on Sunday afternoon. We got a few rave reviews and the point was made – we were on the water!

The committee working on Cruiser Challenge VIII has been hard at work. It really makes one appreciate all the time and energy Commodore Judy spent organizing and launching the first seven Cruiser Challenges. It is scheduled for the weekend of July 27 to 29 with the race on Saturday. The website should be up and running by the time you read this at <https://home.comcast.net/~pat-brennan>. Register early and avoid the rush.

I hope everyone has noticed how good the newsletter and the website are looking these days. Many, many thanks to Mike and Janet Dolan for their work on the newsletter and Mike Westfield for keeping the website looking so spiffy.

Old WW Potters still active.



Harry Gordon, new sail



Rob Sampson, Redwood Creek



Hawaiian Chieftain

Photo by Rob Sampson



Dave Bacon with USS Thompson

Here, Here

**Rich McDevitt** frequently contributes to the Potter Yachter newsletter as he has this month, with his informative article about Lake Del Valle.

**Rob Sampson** has shared his photos of the Tall Ships, the Lady Washington and the Hawaiian Chieftain.

Thanks to these two for their contributions. *Editor*

## Fair Winds, Sunny Sky's !!!

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### With a Grain of Salt

The **Potter Yachter** is a forum for exchange of ideas and information among West Wight Potter (and other mini-yacht) sailors. But we Potter Yachters are mostly a bunch of amateurs finding our way by trial and error and luck.

You will probably find some very helpful tips or ideas in the Potter Yachter that will enhance your sailing experience, but you may also find some ill-advised suggestions or ideas that just don't work for your particular boat, your sailing environment, your level of sailing experience, or your boat-working skills. So please understand that any sailing tutorials, suggested boat modifications, recommended cruises, etc., are the opinion of the author, based presumably on his or her personal experience and judgment at the time the article or letter was written.

If a Potter Yachter believes s/he has a good idea and submits it to the newsletter for publication, we will usually pass it on to the rest of you in the newsletter, but take it "with a grain of salt" and a large portion of your own good judgment, and perhaps get a second opinion before undertaking a modification or cruise or sailing technique you read about in the **Potter Yachter** (or any other publication) - *The Editor*