



The Potter Yachter

Newsletter of the Northern California West Wight Potter Club

May 2003

Sail Calendar

May 3: Oakland Estuary Salt and Pepper Sail from 5th Street ramp

May 17 and 18: Woodward Reservoir. Boat Rodeo

June 7 and 8: Richmond overnight with a day sail to Angel Island.

June 28 and 29: Eagle Lake (make it a long weekend.)

July 3 through 7: Delta anchor out and fireworks cruise. Extension up to 7 days.

July 18-20: SCA Cruiser Challenge, Monterey Bay

August 10 Redwood City Day Sail

August 23 and 24 , Richmond to Loch Lomond with overnight at Richmond Harbor

Sept 6: Oakland Estuary Day Sail

September 20-21: Enchanted weekend at Tomales Bay

October 5: Daysail at Richmond

October 18-19: Monterey Harbor

Delta Sailors Find Light Air, Heavy Air



Big Turnout of Potter Yachters In The Delta: Lundborg Landing Hosts Overnight Cruise

We had a fifteen boat turnout for our first overnight cruise of the year. 4 P.19's 1 Sun Cat. and 10 P.15's. We filled up the entire guest dock at Lundborg Landing. The folks there were very happy to see us pull up. They went WAY out of their way to make us comfortable. There was Great food, Cold beer, and wonderful company. We were really pleased to see Left Coast Larry Costa show up in his new P.15. He has been Potterless for awhile, and it was fantastic to see him back. Sunday The Landing opened up extra early just for us with hot coffee, and good food.

Although the wind had been light on Saturday, with a lot of motoring and motor-sailing, On Sunday the wind really came up, and some of the group chose or were selected by mother nature for a different, longer route home. Ray and Gene sailing Ray's new P.19 managed to get LOST. Their route took them an extra 15 miles to get back. So other than one boat getting lost and one person falling overboard, we had a FANTASTIC weekend. (Jerry Barrileaux who wrote this report, and Rich Mcdevitt worked hard to ensure everyone was OK and had a great weekend. Thanks to both!)

Salt and Pepper Sail Scheduled May 3rd



“The Usual Suspects” Plan Having Fun in the Estuary

Left to Right, Mike Westfield, Rich McDevitt, Jerry Barrilleaux, Honorary Potter sailor Dick Herman, Dave Lawson, and Don Person gathered on a dock near 5th street Launch Ramp in the Oakland-Alameda Estuary to admire their boats and enjoy the Spring Sunshine. The 5th St. Gang often can be found on a Saturday or a Wednesday sailing in the Estuary between Oakland and Alameda. May 3rd this year will be the annual “Salt and Pepper Sail” when the “Old Salts” will be giving advice to, and helping new, or prospective new, Potter Sailors to gain experience, and learn more about their Potters. Starting time will be 9:00 am Saturday, May 3rd, at the 5th St. Launch Ramp near Jack London Square. Visitors welcome

Woodward Reservoir Sail Weekend Scheduled May 17, 18 near Oakdale, CA.

Woodward reservoir near Oakdale and Modesto in the Central Valley has long been a favorite camping weekend for the Potter Yachters. Woodward Reservoir is about five miles North of the town of Oakdale, California on state road J-14. The shore camping is relatively primitive so bringing a supply of drinking water etc. is a good idea. Traveling South from Stockton on I-99 Turn East on Hiway 120 at Manteca, stay on 120 to J-14 and then turn North to Woodward Reservoir. (See the map of Woodward on page 4): Last year Potter Yachter Commodore Rich McDevitt arranged some “Boat Rodeo” games for the assembled P-15 and P-19 Skippers, and more may be in store for this year’s gathering.

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S.F. Bay Potter Sailors Visit the Wreckage of "The Thompson" and Learn The Story of One of the Worst Sea Tragedies Ever Caused by an Error in Navigation.

Story by Harry Gordon

The South Bay's "Four Stacker"

If you look on a marine chart of San Francisco Bay, you will see a shipwreck symbol opposite Redwood Creek at 37 deg 33.23 min N, 122 deg 9.44 min W. That is the resting place of the *USS Thompson*, DD305, a 1919 *Clemson* class, Navy destroyer. Called "four stackers" or "flush deckers," 156 *Clemson* class destroyers were built. Woody Guthrie's "Ballad of the *Reuben James*" was a tribute to another *Clemson*-class destroyer, the first US Navy ship lost in World War II. *Clemsons*, including the DD305, were also involved in the Navy's worst peacetime disaster. On the night of 8 September 1923, 14 ships of Destroyer Squadron 11, including DD305, were conducting a high-speed engineering run from San Francisco to San Diego, cruising at 20 knots. The *Thompson* had experienced engine trouble and fallen behind but then was able to catch up and rejoin the squadron, moving into the rear position in the single-file, column formation.

Only the lead ship, the flagship *USS Delphy*, was responsible for navigation; the other ships were expected to follow the leader. It was a dark overcast night with no stars visible for celestial navigation. There were no GPS, LORAN, or radar then, and they could not take soundings at 20 knots. The lead ship navigator estimated their position by dead reckoning using the magnetic compass and measuring distance covered by counting engine revolutions. A radio bearing from Point Arguello was discounted because the squadron commander was sure they were further south than the bearing indicated and therefore they must be on the reciprocal of the bearing. If they continued on their course too far there was danger of running into San Miguel, one of the Channel Islands. Despite the uncertainties of their navigation, the squadron commander was convinced they had reached the Santa Barbara channel and ordered the formation to make a left turn to 095 degrees. One by one, the ships turned, then immediately encoun-

tered fog, but they continued steaming at 20 knots, despite the reduced visibility, each ship following the wake of the one ahead.

But they were not in the Santa Barbara Channel; instead they were steaming head on toward the volcanic rocks and reefs at Honda Point (aka Point Pedernales), near Point Arguello. (Honda Point is now part of Vandenberg Air Force Base.)

Shortly after 2105, a few minutes after the turn to port, seven of the first eight ships had run hard aground on the volcanic rocks and reefs. Two others grounded but were able to back off with little damage. The rest of the formation managed to stop in time to avoid grounding, and the *Thompson*, at the end of the column, did not make the turn toward shore. The escape and rescue of nearly 800 men from the stranded ships onto the rocks and to the shore and to shelter was an incredible demonstration of seamanship and heroism, but 23 lives were lost: 3 on the *Delphy*, which had broken in two, and 20 on the *Young*, which had capsized and ripped open.

The *Thompson* remained with the Pacific fleet until 1930, when she was decommissioned, along with many other destroyers, in accordance with an international agreement limiting the size of the fleet (Ten years later, destroyers were desperately needed when German submarines were devastating Atlantic convoys). The ship was sold for scrap but was instead used as a floating restaurant somewhere in lower San Francisco Bay during the depression 30's. In 1944, the Navy repurchased the ship and scuttled her in the present location, where she was used as a practice bombing target during World War II. Information on the Internet says "dummy bombs" were used, but the shredded condition of the iron ship

Navigation Disaster: Cont'd.

doesn't appear to be the result of rust alone.

To visit the *Thompson* from Redwood City, head out the Redwood Creek channel to at least marker 5, which is well past the end of Bair Island. Observe your chart and tide tables; the water can get thin very quickly if you leave the channel too soon. If you have GPS, set a waypoint to the longitude and latitude of the *Thompson* (above). You will see the *Thompson* if you're anywhere near because there is nothing else sticking out of the water in that part of the Bay. It's a good idea to set another waypoint near marker 5 to help you find your way back to the channel, or you can retrace your own GPS track back to the channel.

At low tide, more of the ship is visible, but you may be sailing in pretty thin water. You might prefer to approach slowly under power. At higher tide, more of the wreck will be under water. On my first visit, I didn't realize how big the ship actually was, and Manatee's centerboard and outboard collided with a chock on the submerged forward deck when I motored in front of the visible wreckage. (I was able to report on the Potter mail list that *Manatee* had

"rammed a destroyer.") I now generally stand off some distance on my occasional visits. I'm not sure, but it appears that there is some kind of dock or deck attached to the wreckage, and it may be possible to tie up there and get a better look at the ship. I might try that one day when the wind is down and the water is smooth.

I've seen no warning signs posted on the site, and I presume the Navy, at some time, cleared out any unexploded ordnance, but who knows? In any case I don't intend to be climbing about within the rusted, jagged hulk. Wrecked Navy ships normally remain the property of the Navy, and shipwrecks are now considered archaeological sites, so removal of souvenirs is inadvisable.

I read that local youths would boat out to the *Thompson* during WWII and have parties there. On one such occasion, they had to depart quickly when they saw a flight of Corsairs coming their way, according to the account. What remains now is barely recognizable as a ship and doesn't look like a place to party.

A couple of weeks ago, Dave Kautz anchored near the *Thompson* (in about

7 feet of water), then Don Person and I rafted up our Potters on each side of *Tilly Lucy*, but it was not a sheltered anchorage, and we stayed just long enough to eat a hasty lunch as our boats bobbed and bumped in the swells.

Be sure to retrace your track back to the Redwood channel. What looks like a shortcut across open water is not. Dave and I were a little off our reciprocal on a previous return to the channel, but fortunately we were on a run and managed to slide across the shoals with centerboards and rudders up and hulls just kissing the mud. HG

About the Author: Harry Gordon is one of the founding members of the Northern California Potter Club, and it was one of Harry's many creative contributions, that he suggested the name "The Potter Yachters". Harry sails his thirty-year old Lateen rigged P-14 "Manatee" with the many other fine Potter sailors from "The Redwood CityGang"....

Woodward Reservoir Camp-out

The Potter Yachters will be camped near the tip, on the west side of the long peninsula you see jutting into Woodward lake from the South, . . . When you arrive at the entrance and Ranger's booth on the West side of the lake, you will bear to the right and wind your way along the Southern perimeter of the lake until you get to the park road that turns left and leads out to the end of the peninsula.





Bill and P-19 "Chubby" May Take Voyage to Alaska

SMALL BOAT, BIG OCEAN:
When Bill Teplow, a geologist who sails on San Francisco Bay, got a job assignment in Hawaii, he had his own way of getting there. Rather than flying, he'd sail his own boat. The only problem was, his boat was only 19 feet long. His West Wight Potter, called Chubby, was not built for offshore adventuring; but Teplow sailed solo anyway, leaving the Bay on July 21, 2002. He arrived safely in Hawaii 24 days later and only hit mild wind conditions. Chubby will be on view at Pacific SAIL EXPO (PSE) and Teplow gave a seminar on Saturday on the preparations and planning he made for his passage to Hawaii. Just weeks before PSE, Chubby was refitted with a new carbon-fiber composite keel with a lead bulb to improve the boat's performance and stability--and Teplow's plans for a new voyage are brewing. He'd like to explore the West Coast north of the Bay. The "right way," as Teplow says, would be to ship the boat to Alaska and sail south and downwind along the coast. But Teplow hopes to go the opposite way, which would mean a more rugged upwind trip for his small boat. Some may see Teplow as one who sails against conventional wisdom, but he's exploring the potential of his boat. "The most wind I've been in with Chubby is 27 knots," he says. "I don't know what it would look like in 35, 40 knots. The discussion's still open on that."

Second Version has Full Length Battens: Testing Of Ultra-sail's "Square Top" P-15 Mainsail Continues on Estuary

The NEWEST Ultra Sail Mainsail was a huge improvement over the first design. The full length battens look and work great. On the test day, winds were light in the morning, but freshened up to about 10 knots later. The new sail seemed to point a little better than the stock sail, and it worked nice in light air. At one point I was on a reach, and the wind suddenly came up. WOW! she took off like a rocket, I have never felt this kind of performance before. At one point I was following an Islander 28 that was tacking out the channel. I was following his exact course, and keeping up until the wind died a bit. I was also able to keep up with my friend Bill Harmon in his Santana 22 sailing to windward. I hope Mike can post some photo's of the New sail. We had 9 boats out yesterday, 8 Potters and Dick's beautiful Sun Cat.

After a great day of sailing and sunshine I turned over the New sail to Don Person to try out on Sarah Anne during the Wednesday Sail. We'll keep you posted on further testing. Jerry Barrileaux , #564 Breezy

Don Person reports:, "I tried out the prototype Ultra P15 main sail yesterday. The winds were light. The strongest around seven knots. The additional sail area seemed to definitely move the boat better. When the wind got up a little we slowly and steadily heeled and the boat speed picked up rapidly. At these wind speeds at least there is no more weather helm than with the standard P15 main and the transition in the gusts nice and steady without abrupt rounding up. My impression is this is a really nice sail."

(photo: Mike Westfield)

(Story by Cynthia Goss, PSE)



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Inside the Potter Yachter

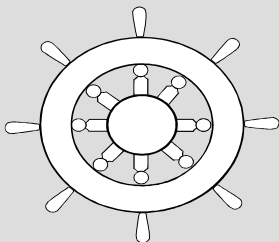
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With a Grain of Salt

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 ex-

perience 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*

