



Potter to Potter

NORCAL WWP NEWS



April '79

Sat./Sun. April 7-8: The Bodega Bay sail proved to be quite an experience, according to those who attended: #789, Stan, Dorothy, and Walt Butler; #512 De & Sydney Marsh; #567 Bob & Sharen Adair & family; #266 John & Barbara Simpson; #234 Harry & Sandy Gordon & family; and the Jerry Barrilleaux family, with a tent-trailer instead of the boat this time.

Jerry Barrilleaux telephoned this account of the weekend: De & Stan launched their boats early, then later the Simpsons and Bob Adair (with Jerry as crew) followed suit. The Gordons didn't get a chance to launch--Harry decided against tackling the late afternoon winds (he had driven up after work).

Bob & Jerry sailed out toward the ocean, trying to locate Stan's #789, to witness the abalone diving. After some time, they used binoculars and finally sighted a Coast Guard boat alongside what appeared to be a capsized Potter. They sailed to the scene and discovered Stan's boat had indeed turned turtle and was floating upside down (a detailed account follows). After assuring that Stan & Walt were okay and in Coast Guard care, Bob & Jerry sailed toward De Marsh to ward him off from the scene of the accident, but De had his eye on his abalone hole, and did indeed manage to harvest two ab's. Trying to return to the harbor, De ran into a problem with his motor and had a skirmish with the rocks at the harbor entrance (nothing too serious, we hear) before finally getting back to shore.

The afternoon winds started to show a little too much spirit and the chill factor went downright unpleasant, so sailing ended for the day. But the wind wasn't through with the Potter Yachters yet, and during the night it vented its full fury on the Harry Gordon family, who had the displeasure of having their tent collapse upon them in the cold, black of night; they ALL FOUR slept in their nice LITTLE CAR the remainder of the night--and have lived to tell of it!!

Sunday's weather brought no change--still blustery, cold winds and prohibitive sailing conditions, and no one had any regrets about

leaving for home.

The following letter was written by Stan Butler, who reports on #789's encounter with a sneaker wave:

"In order that it may be viewed from a proper perspective it seems to be in the best interest of the Potter owners to report on the conditions and circumstances of my accident at Bodega Bay in some detail.

"We arrived early, about 9:30, at the launch area. The water conditions, in the bay, were relatively flat with a good wind or what might be called brisk sailing weather. Unfortunately, I knew from experience this early wind would increase and make water conditions near Bodega Rock, our abalone diving area, rougher and dirtier as the day progressed.

"For those unfamiliar; Bodega Rock is a bit over a mile to seaward and forms part of the barrier between the open ocean and the bay. There are shallow water reefs around it all adjacent to the deeper ocean. These conditions are guaranteed to produce rough and dirty water if either a swell or heavy wind chop are present.

"With this in mind, my son Walt and I donned our diving suits, decided to set up the mast, motor out, get our abalone, and sail back before the underwater visibility and surge made diving conditions impossible. Upon arriving at Bodega Rock we found rough marginal diving water and decided to anchor on the lee side but somewhat to the North. Water depth seemed to be about 10 feet and 90 feet of anchor line brought the boat comfortably head into the 2-3 foot seas. While still on the bow I heard a roar and looked up into a tremendous, nearly vertical wall of water approaching at great speed. The bow started to lift, I yelled to Walt, "Hang on!", and was immediately swept back into the mast. Things were somewhat confused but I believe the boat was approximately in a vertical position standing on its stern when both Walt and I were washed overboard. The boat was slammed over onto its top while

April '7

Walt and I were being tumbled around underwater. Several more large swells washed over us and the inverted boat after which the water calmed down to the previous small chop.

"A powerboat fisherman who saw the spill from a calmer area reached us in about 10 min. Fortunately he was equipped with a radio and quickly called the Coast Guard at Bodega Bay.

"The Potter at the time was still floating at anchor upside down. Upon the arrival of the Coast Guard Walt and I transferred to the cutter which then went alongside the Potter. We picked up the anchor line and slowly towed the Potter into deeper protected water for righting. This posed a bit of a problem. It is as once the Coast Guard rescues you, they cannot let you reenter the water. We finally solved this dilemma by, in effect, 'falling overboard' again. After righting the Potter and pumping out most of the water, we were able to assess the damage. The mast was bent, mast socket torn out, cabin and deck badly broken up, and even the name plate on the transom was hanging by one rivet.

"Some questions asked:

1. What caused this exceptional set of waves? I believe this is known as a 'sleeper' or 'rouge' wave caused in part by a large, deep swell at sea. As this swell approaches shallow water it is forced upward and accelerated by the shoaling bottom. The result can be spectacular.

2. Can this happen anyplace in ocean water? I have not experienced it before in 25 years of diving/boating activities. We knew the shoaling conditions where we anchored could be conducive to heavy wave action, but generally deeper water or protected waters such as our bays do not have the conditions needed for their formation.

3. Was the Potter especially vulnerable in this accident? Positively not. This was a skindiving accident where we knowingly went into the kind of rough water sailboaters avoid. We've previously dove in this area using 12-foot open boats and divers' paddle boards; however, none of these could have survived in the water we had Saturday.

4. Was the equipment faulty in design? Definitely not; I purchased the Potter because I believed it to be a stable, safe rough water boat. My belief has not changed.

5. Could you have prevented this? Yes, I had the experience and knowledge but I clearly underestimated the magnitude of the swells. It is worth noting that De Marsh took #512 to the Rock, recognized the problem, anchored in a different location, found nearly impossible diving conditions, but still safely brought

back two abalone.

6. A terrifying experience? Surprisingly not. We didn't have time initially and once swimming clear of the wreckage, survival was never a concern.

7. Will you continue sailing the Potter? Emphatically yes, as soon as it is repaired. At the time of the upset we were not sailors, but rather we were using the Potter as a diving platform in bad waters.

"There are probably many more questions, possibly additional answers can be developed at the dinner meeting. I will have a few slides to show. In no way would I wish this accident to concern other Potter users. The Potter, properly used, is safe. We have many enthusiastic owners and have had some terrifying outings. In the meantime, anyone need a slightly damp crewmember?"

(Stan enclosed a note with his letter stating that the boat was insured.)

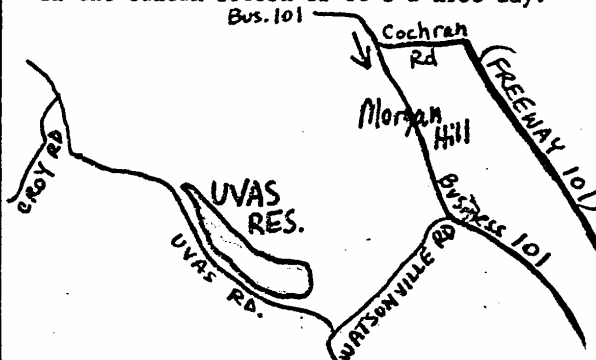
Thanks, Stan, for a very informative and perceptive letter.

MAY SAIL

Saturday, May 5: Uvas Reservoir: This sail was suggested by 'Baja Bob' Adair (well, if you can't get to Baja, Uvas will just have to do!). Uvas is located in southern Santa Clara County (see map); take 101 south through San Jose, and about 2 miles past Morgan Hill turn right (southwest) onto Watsonville Rd. Continue about 4 mi., then turn right (west) onto Uvas Rd. and continue to the County Park entrance.

There is a two-lane concrete ramp; "no powerboats allowed except with electric motor so we'll have to leave our gas motors behind, also. The reservoir is at high water level. There is a picnic area and fishing is allowed but swimming may be prohibited.

Launch time: 10:00 a.m. There is a small launch fee. Bring a picnic lunch, and throw in the suntan lotion if it's a nice day!



ANNIVERSARY DINNER

Saturday, April 21, 5 p.m., King's Table Restaurant, Redwood City.

This is working into a Big Event! Come anytime after 5 and ask for the Potter Yachters. The restaurant serves buffet style and you can eat whenever you arrive. A slide projector WILL be available. Bring your pictures (LABEL everything with your name), your remembrances, and your ideas for future sails. Mr. Joseph Edwards, new owner of HMS Marine, has accepted our invitation and plans to be in attendance, and we're all looking forward to meeting him.

While you're at the dinner, steal a few minutes to browse through the "Blue Book". It contains all our own monthly newsletters, plus all the S. Calif. monthly newsletters since Aug. '77. Also included:

--a booklet called "October Potter" given us by the Walt Nobis; it was written by Stanley Smith; especially check the last few pages for his recommendation about how to sail a Potter (after all, he did design and build the first Potter!)

--a copy of the 'Constitution and Bylaws of the WWP International Assn.'

--a treasurer's report

--several magazine articles about Potters, including the recent article in the Jan '79 issue of 'Trailer Boats' mag

Please return to the Blue Book any material you read; in most cases it's the only copy we have.

Also while you're at the dinner, check the new 'fleet roster' of Potter owners which will be available. Mark any additions or corrections; later the roster will be typed and sent to you.

Remember, the anniversary dinner is your chance to meet the greatest number of Potter owners in one place at one time--plus, you might even win the door prize! See you there!

OPENING DAY

S.F. BAY YACHTING SEASON OPENING DAY:
Sunday, April 29: Launch from Sausalito between 7:30 and 8:00 a.m. Jerry Barrilleaux warns you MUST launch early to avoid congestion both at the ramp and in Racoon Strait. (The "Blessings of the Fleet" commences in Racoon Strait at 9:30 a.m., and by then Jerry hopes to be safely beached at Hospital Cove on Angel Is.). The following directions are reprinted from the Jan. '79 newsletter, which also contains a map: "The launch ramp at Sausalito is located at Caruso's on Harbor Drive. Harbor Dr. is the first street right after leaving the freeway

(101) as you are entering Sausalito. The launch area is good with a ramp on either side of the dock and ample trailer parking. The launch fee is a stiff \$4.00 payable at the gas dock."

Further discussion of Opening Day is likely at the anniversary dinner.

POTTER NATIONALS

The annual "Potters only" race will be held on April 29 at Marina del Rey; starting time 1:30 p.m. For more details consult last month's newsletter or call Jim Mangels at 408-255-8579, or contact the S. Calif. WWP Assn: Chuck Holden 213-372-7896 or Frank Foote 714-770-4329.

There is a buffet dinner and awards ceremony (reservations required) following the race, and special overnight rates are available from a specific motel.

Last year's race saw a 20-boat turnout in sunny 70-degree weather with 8-knot winds. Our own De Marsh, with Stan Butler as crew, sailed #512 in last year's race; see De's report on the race and the splendors of Marina del Rey in the May '78 newsletter.

NEW OWNER

(Plus a bit of a history lesson!)

You'll recognize the last name of the newest Potter Yachter member, for he's a descendant of Thomas Wight, who emigrated from --you guessed it--the Isle of Wight, the very isle where the original, English, plywood Potter was conceived and refined by Stanley Smith in the early 1960's. (Herb & Ann Stewart of Marina del Rey began production of the Potter in the U.S. in the mid-60's --making the boat of fiberglass--and eventual bought production rights to the Potter. The Stewarts recently sold 'HMS Marine' to current owner and company president, Mr. Joe Edwards)

The Bill Wights are experienced sailboat owners/racers, as Bill's recent letter reveals "We sure have fallen in love with our WWP and given her a real workout in the last two weeks. Raced her yesterday and although we had a lot of fun and the corrected time results are not out yet, we realize we are not much of a match for Santana 22's and the like. Joyce and I look forward to meeting...the...Northern Calif. Potterers on the 21st". Bill recently served as Sail Commodore for a Bay Area yacht club (Sorry, I lost my notes saying which club!)

So, welcome the Wights, who have finally
come home to their namesake:

Potter #818 - 'Isle of Wight'
'Bill' (Willard) & Joyce Wight
116 Montego Key
Bel Marin Keys
Novato, CA 94947

HARRY, YOU'RE TERRIFIC

Harry Gordon, who definitely has a way
with words (he wrote the whopping Dec. '78
issue) has again volunteered his efforts
and will write and publish the May newsletter.

So, all together now...one, two, three:

"THANKS, HARRY!"

(The loudest voice you heard was mine, natch!)