



The Potter Yachter

Newsletter of the Potter Yachters

October, 2010 Bonus Edition

Special ATUS Messabout Edition

(Because Yours Truly forgot to put it in the October PYN)



MESSABOUT VIII

Incident Report

by

Dick Herman

*Photos by James Ferguson, Dick Herman, Francesca Kautz,
Tom Luque, Don Person, Rob Pettit and Rob Sampson*

Okay, let's be upfront about this - it is not rational to drag a small sailboat almost 900 miles one way to spend eleven days pottering around the San Juan and Gulf Island with the sure knowledge you are going to get rained on. But that is what happened on the eighth iteration of "The Great Potter Yachter Northwest Escape and Messabout." Besides, boats are meant to get wet, although most skippers prefer that it's the bottom half. To that end, sixteen Suspects in fourteen boats did exactly that.

Most of the intrepid souls set out the weekend of August 28-29 and meandered at a reasonable pace towing their boats northward. John Wheeler in "Dauntless", his Dorset 17 motor cruiser, was waiting at Squalicum Harbor in Bellingham, WA, to greet them. John is a plank holder from the first Messabout in September 2003 and couldn't make the trip but he wanted to wish the Suspects well and share the moment. As always, the folks in the Harbor Master's office seemed glad to see the Potter Yachters again and had reserved a guest dock for the hearty sailors.

True to form, it rained on Tuesday and a few boats had to rig in the rain. Needless to say, the Suspects kept a wary eye on the weather and were relieved when the skies started to clear in the afternoon. Tom Luque from Camas, Washington, was the last to arrive and had JoJoma, his well-stocked /supplied/outfitted/modified P-19, tied up at the guest dock by midnight.



Leaving Otter Bay. Rob Sampson's Ranger tug Mud Hen and Commodore Herman in Muddy Duck

The fleet of fourteen boats that set out for Fossil Bay on Sucia Island on Wednesday, 1 September, was the biggest yet on a Messabout. Ron Hunter in his P-19, "NV US", had Mike Traynor along as crew. Two newbies to the Messabout, but very experienced sailors, Dave and Francesca Kautz were sailing "Trailer Trash", their O'Day 192. Robbie Pettit from Ennis, Montana, was the real rookie on the cruise with "Snow Goose", his recently acquired P-15. Another newbie was Rob Sampson in "Mud Hen", his 21-foot Ranger Tug. For the purist who wonders about having a power boat along . . . well . . . "Mud Hen" soon became Mother Hen and Rob is one the of the good shepherds of the sailing world.

The other newbie to the cruise was Doug Kelch from Anthem, Arizona. Doug sails "Seas The Day", the only gaff-rigged cutter Montgomery 15 in captivity. It was soon evident that Doug is a veteran of the cruising world who would rather be out sailing than tied up at the dock for a Happy Hour. The Suspects are working on that.

The usual Suspects were in attendance. The P-15 fleet was represented by Dave Bacon in "Ah Tiller The Fun", Jim Ferguson from Vancouver, Washington, in "Esmeralda", and Don Person in "Sarah Anne". Brad Evans was smiling a lot in "Mosey", his Vagabond 17, as was Dick Herman in "Muddy Duck", a ComPac 17 SunCat. Jim Kirwan was back in "Surprise", a Monty 15, along with Mike Trueman in "Midget", his pristine Monty 15. Dan "We don't need no stinkin' rules" Phy, the only survivor, I mean veteran, of all previous Messabouts was there in "Six", his sharp Montgomery 17.



Rare'n to go at Squilicum Harbor

Wednesday, 9/1. The weather was good and the Suspects cast off at 08:30 to catch the favorable currents to Fossil Bay on Sucia Island, 19 nautical miles away. It was a long day and many motorsailed at least part of the way. It was very comforting to see "Mud Hen" roam back and forth like a sheepdog tending its flock. All but "Seas The Day" arrived by three o'clock and eleven boats were able to tie up at the dock while three hooked up to nearby buoys. Happy Hour progressed very nicely and a bunch of contented Suspects bedded down for their first night.

Thursday, 9/2. Again, currents were a factor and all boats were away by 07:15 for the 16 nm motorsail to Bedwell Harbor on South Pender Island in B.C. Everyone arrived by 12:40 and cleared Canadian customs and immigration



Suspects clearing Canadian Customs at Bedwell Harbour, South Pender Island

by telephone. There was a tense moment when Dan, in a loud voice a few feet away from Dick who was on the phone, asked Brad, "What lies did you tell her?" It is not known if the customs officer heard the comment, but her immediate comment was, "Please hold."

Now things got sporting. Bedwell Harbor is a posh resort and not really tuned for the likes of the Suspects. So it was decided to sail up the channel and under the South Pender Island Bridge to Port Browning, 2.5 nm away. The sporting bit was the bridge with a



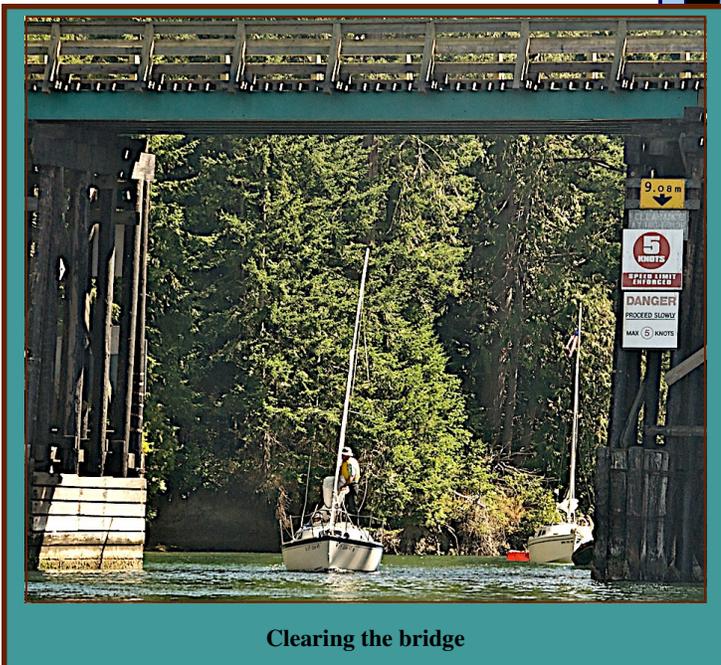
29 foot clearance at high water. But some charts held it at 26 feet. Don Hunter opted for caution over valor and left early to take the long way around South Pender Island. The rest of the Suspects milled around for a while before charging ahead. The small boats went under the bridge first with no problem. Jim Kirwan made it through as the wind kicked up and marshaled the big boats through. "Trailer Trash" raked its mast back 45 degrees to be safe and all the others made it with room to spare. It all looked easy, but it was a neat bit of small-boat handling all around.

Don Hunter was waiting at Port Browning with slip assignments and the Suspects tied up together. Neal and

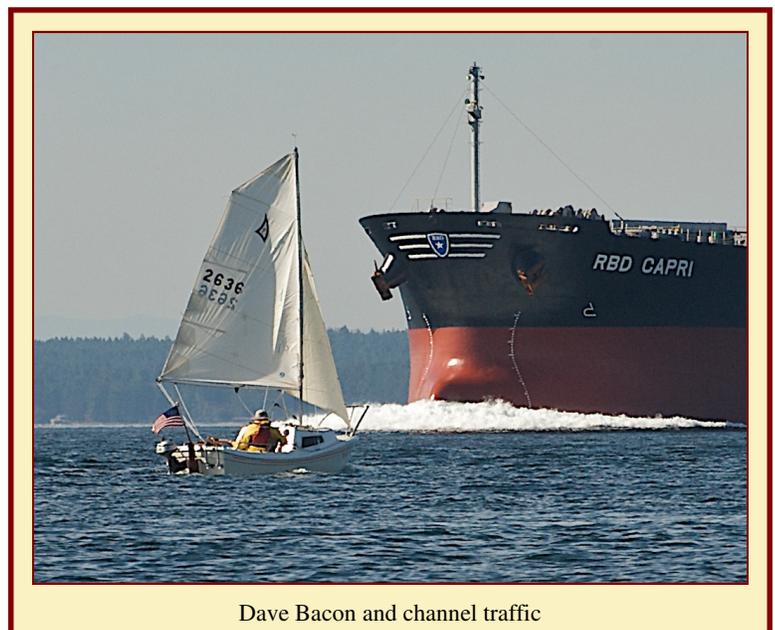
Victoria Fennell had sailed in from Victoria in their P-19, "Dolly Dagger", to join the group. Keren, their pretty seven-year-old daughter, was with them and a sparkling addition to the cruise. Port Browning is a friendly, very pretty marina, and most of the suspects enjoyed a great dinner at the pub.

Friday, 9/3. After a great breakfast at the marina cafe, the Suspects were away by 10:00 under clear skies for Montague Harbour on Galiano Island. They motor-sailed into Plumper Sound and turned north to challenge a current in Navy Channel. Most skippers held to the left of the channel, hoping for a favorable counter-current. It was there and a few skippers sailed out of the last half of the channel only to run into a ferry infestation as four big B.C. ferries transited Active Pass on the south end of Galiano Island. All but "Seas The Day" arrived at Montague Harbor by 1:30. Thanks to the early arrival, they were able to find dock space at the government dock.

"Seas the Day" arrived just before Happy Hour on the dock. One thing led to another and a contingent set out



Clearing the bridge



Dave Bacon and channel traffic



to catch the Hummingbird Pub bus for dinner. The Hummingbird is a charming, rustic place with great food and service. A contented group gathered outside after dinner to catch the bus back. For a reason that escapes understanding, the conversation turned to the constituent properties of stainless steel and related topics of the same ilk. Afraid the discussion would soon turn to a theoretical analysis of the cosmological implications of string theory to Potterdom, Dick shamed the discussants into more mundane, non-intellectual, but more stimulating subjects.

Saturday, 9/4. With threatening Labor Day crowds, the Suspects headed for Ganges on Salt Spring Island. All boats were away by 9:00 for the eight nm leg. The weather and winds cooperated and most skippers were able to sail at least half way. The folks at Ganges Marina were actually

glad to see the Suspects and moored them together at A dock, a long walk to the washrooms. Well, maybe they weren't that glad to see them. Because of Labor Day, the Suspects planned to spend two nights at Ganges. After sampling the restaurants and the Saturday craft fair, the Suspects gathered for Happy Hour. Jeremy Milson, the proprietor of the Salt Spring Inn, sailed up in "Amelia", his Danica 16. He welcomed us to Ganges and spent a delightful evening swapping sea stories.

Sunday, 9/5. Eleven of the Suspects descended on Salt Spring Inn for breakfast and were waiting when the doors opened at 08:00. The lone waitress was up to the challenge, called for reinforcements, and did a great job. Later Dick and Don motorsailed back to Montague Harbour for lunch and to check out rumors of a great Key Lime pie at the marina cafe. While they were away, the



Suspects roamed the town, day sailed, and had a laid back day. (Auth note: the Key Lime pie was really a custard pie and definitely above average.)

That evening at Happy Hour, the obligatory NOG (Nautical Order of Geezers) investiture was held and the candidates were inducted into NOG status by the Senior NOG, Don Person. Francesca and Victoria smiled benignly as the oath was administered to Neal Fennell, Jim Ferguson, Dave Kautz, Doug Kelch, Tom Luque, Rob Pettit, and Rob Sampson. (Auth note: Francesca and Victoria indulgently joined in the proceedings, but it was impossible to tell what they were thinking, which is a good thing.)

Later, a few Suspects wandered over to M.O.B.Y.S., a nearby pub, for dinner. Sadly, the service left much to be desired. Most were in bed by 9:00 that evening.



Dock party Ganges Marina, Salt Spring Island. From left: Stephanie and Neal Fennel, Doug Kelch, Brad Evans, Victoria Fennel, Jim Kirwan, Robbie Pettit, Jim Ferguson, Dave Kautz

Monday, 9/6. Rain was in the forecast and the hearty souls opted to spend another day at Ganges. Unfortunately, Neal, Victoria, and Keren had to return to Victoria and the realities of working for a living. For the Suspects, staying was a good decision as the rain arrived as predicted. After a quiet day and an excellent dinner at Salt Spring Inn, most were in their bunks by 9:00.

Tuesday, 9/7. It was still raining when the Suspects poked their heads out in the morning. But the weather prophets claimed it was clearing, which was confirmed by the locals. After a weather hold, the Suspects slipped



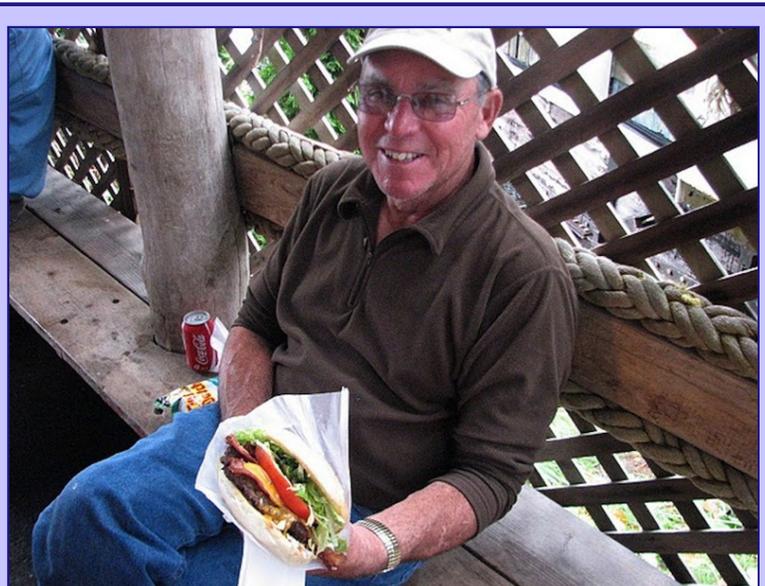
Suspects at Breakfast at Salt Spring Inn, Ganges



The fleet departing Ganges Harbor.

their dock lines at 11:00 and headed for Otter Bay Marina, eight nm away on North Pender Island. After sailing most of the way, and experiencing the required confrontation with ferries in Swanson Channel, they arrived in good order at 1:30. Most headed for "The Stand," a kiosk by the ferry terminal a quarter mile away, that serves a world-class hamburger. The proprietress remembered us from 2007, and unanimous consensus held the hamburgers alone were worth the trip to Otter Bay. Besides, Otter Bay Marina is one neat place. Happy Hour on the dock that evening was more relaxed than usual, if possible, and friendly conversations were struck up with the natives.

Wednesday, 9/8. Weather was again a problem and rain was in the forecast. After consulting the required iPods and oracles, it was decided to start heading for Squalicum Harbor in case the weather turned snarky. Everyone was away by 09:10 to take advantage of a following current as the fleet headed for Roche Harbor on San Juan Island to clear U.S. customs. The Suspects were making a good five knots as they headed south down the western side of North Pender Island. Conditions got interesting south of South Pender Island where Swanson Channel, Boundary Pass, and Haro Strait converge. The boats were tossed around by the currents, suddenly accelerating and turning. After punching through the turbulence, it turned into a motorsail the last seven miles to Roche Harbor. It was a memorable experience sailing past the big container ships and tankers plying Haro Strait.



Rob Pettit enjoys a world-class hamburger at The Stand, North Pender Island.



Most of the Suspects arrived at the customs dock by 12:40 and patiently waited for a space to open up while a gold-plated mega yacht idled its thrusters, also waiting for dock space. As usual, “*Seas the Day*” was the last to arrive, and squeezed in front of the gold-plater, raising the skipper’s blood pressure. Well done, Doug.

Now it was decision time. Dan, Brad, Jim K., Doug, and the Kautz’s decided to head for Garrison Bay and anchor out rather than partake of the hedonistic delights of Roche Harbor. After tying up at the dock and paying the roaming, and very pretty, marina cashier, the Suspects wandered around the harbor. Later that evening, seven of the NOGs meandered down the dock to McMillin’s, Roche Harbor’s pre-

mier eatery. They crowded around a table and were impressed by Roche Harbor’s retreat ceremony. The meal was very good, but not up to McMillin’s usual high standards. However, the prices were.

Thursday, 9/9. Eight of the Roche crew gathered at the Lime Kiln Cafe for breakfast. Then, with an eye cocked at the weather, Tom launched around 09:30 to test the currents in Spieden Channel on the northern end of San Juan Island. Brad Evans sailed in from Garrison Bay with the news that Dan, Brad, Doug, and the Kautz’s were going to take the long way around the southern end of San Juan Island and



rendezvous at Friday Harbor. Tom radioed back that he was making good time in Spieden and the Roche contingent launched, heading for Friday Harbor, eleven nm away. After sailing about two miles down Spieden Channel, it turned into a motorsail around Limestone Point and down the San Juan Channel. But the weather cooperated and the skies were clear. The Garrison Bay crowd arrived around 1:30 with the last of the Roche escapees.

The Harbor Master assigned the Suspects to the commercial dock under the Harbor Master’s office. It was speculated the boats made a Kodak moment for the touristas, but a darker eye held the Harbor Master wanted to keep an eye on the group. Re-

ardless, they were near the restroom on the dock. After sampling the delights of Friday Harbor, most of the suspects were in their bunks by nine that evening.

Friday, 9/10. A few of the Suspects wandered up town, which is up hill, for breakfast and everyone was away by nine o'clock. Most headed for Olga on Orcas Island for lunch at the general store while a few boats made directly for Blakely Island Marina, one of the gems of the San Juans. After rafting up at the government dock at Olga, the Suspects discovered the store was closed. However, the Olga Cafe was open and only a long block away. After a superb lunch, the Suspects headed for Blakely.

Everyone was tied up and checked in by three PM. Assured that hot coffee and freshly baked donuts would be available



in the morning, the Suspects settled in for their last night on the cruise. The sun had barely cleared the yardarm when they gathered for the last Happy Hour on the dock. A few passerby's, including Kelly, a comely lass who sails a Columbia 26 solo, were dragooned into the proceedings. Later, a few Suspects wandered up to the store for chili and then later gathered at "Trailer Trash" for a wistful evening of amiable conversation and the last of the wine.

Saturday, 9/11. The weather was still holding, although rain was in the forecast for Sunday. "NV US" was the first away, destination – Squaleicum Harbor at Bellingham, 18 nm away. The rest were launched by 08:30. By playing the currents in Rosario Strait, the Suspects were able to sail 2/3s of the way to round the southern tip of Lummi Island. Then it turned into a typical Bellingham

Bash as they turned to the NE for the eight miles across the bay. But it was a lovely day as the Suspects found safe harbor. Again, Doug was the last to arrive, flashing a big smile.

Finally, the boats were on their trailers and ready to go. Everyone gathered for the obligatory group photo, handshakes, and hugs. On cue, they laughed and chorused the traditional words ending a Messabout, "Cheated death again!"





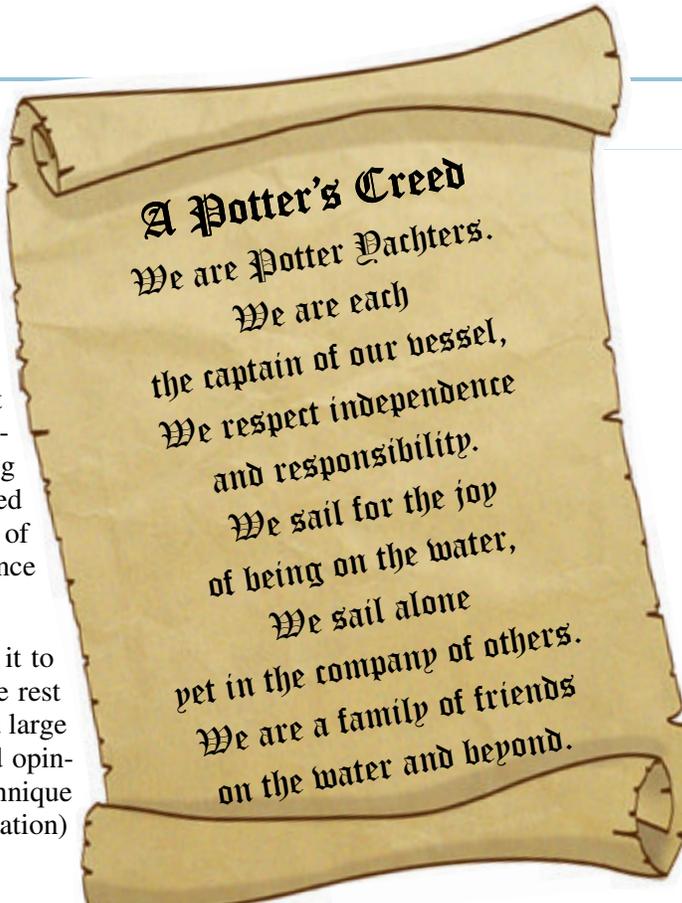
Patrick Brennan
1305 Webster St., C205
Alameda, CA 94501

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*



A Potter's Creed
We are Potter Yachters.
We are each
the captain of our vessel,
We respect independence
and responsibility.
We sail for the joy
of being on the water,
We sail alone
yet in the company of others.
We are a family of friends
on the water and beyond.