



The Potter Yachter

Newsletter of the Longest Lasting West Wight Potter Club in the World

January 2015

HAPPY NEW YEAR!!

Upcoming: Sunday, January 18, 2015 - Breakfast and Meeting

Annual Club Meeting at Oakland Yacht Club

The Potter Yachters' Annual Meeting is set for January 18th from around 10am until 1pm in the Regatta Room of the Oakland Yacht Club. As usual, the club offers a tasty breakfast starting at around 9am. (The [breakfast menu](#) can sometimes be found with [directions to the club](#) on their website: www.oaklandyachtclub.net)

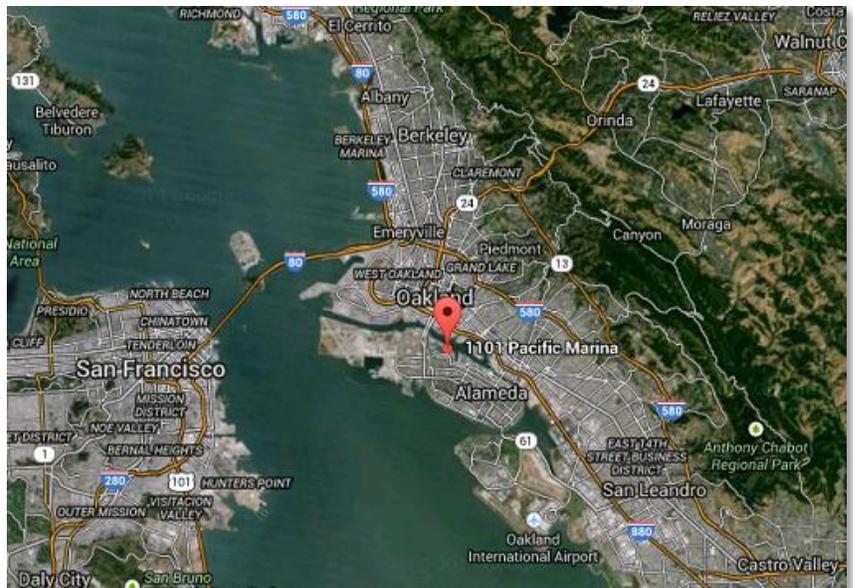
Any members who joined within the last year are specifically invited to attend this meeting. It's the perfect opportunity to introduce yourself, meet like-minded sailors, and let the rest of us enjoy your company. Regardless of when you joined, this is the one time we sit down to get a treasurer's report, nominate officers, and discuss future sails, so please make every effort to attend.

As mentioned elsewhere, the Official 2015 Potter Yachter Calendar will be available at the meeting, so bring your checkbook or cash. On the subject, membership dues are based on the calendar year and we vote on the amount at the annual meeting. As is our custom, there will be a voluntary exchange of nautical gifts after the meeting for those wishing to participate. See you there!

From the North (Berkeley, Bay Bridge)
take 880 S and exit Jackson Street
turn left off the ramp and go under the freeway
turn left on 8th Street
turn left on Webster Street
follow directions from the Posey Tube (below)

From the South (San Jose, Castro Valley)
take 880 N to Oakland and exit Broadway
turn right onto Broadway
turn right on 7th Street
turn right on Webster Street
take the tunnel into Alameda (aka Posey Tube)

From the Posey Tube
keep left and go over the overpass
turn left at Atlantic Ave.
turn left at Triumph Street
the club is located at the end of the street.
parking is in front of the club house



Ship's Stores for sale. Send orders to Pat Brennan:

Show your colors! Fly an official Club Burgee on your next sail!

- Burgees \$25.00
- Bumper stickers \$ 2.50 (just shows the burgee; no text)
- Patches \$ 2.50 (Both round and burgee shaped)
- Info Packets \$20.00 (Primarily P-15 information)

Or head over to our CafePress website and buy a Cap, Stein, or T-Shirt with the club logo on it.

Visit: <http://www.cafepress.com/potteryachters>

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The Commodore's Corner

By Carl Sundholm

Time flies when you're having fun. Suddenly it's already 2015. And with the new year, old salt's thoughts turn to the arrival of Spring and the prospects of a new year of sailing adventures. With that in mind, and given that our Annual Meeting is upcoming on January 18, I offer the following proposed calendar for the new year:

TENTATIVE POTTER YACHTER CALENDAR FOR 2015

01-18-15	Sun	Potter Yachters' Annual Meeting at the Oakland Yacht Club
02-21-15	Sat	Possible Lecture/Talk at OYC or alternative event
03-14-15	Sat	St. Pat's Day Weekend Sail at Redwood City (<i>Carl</i>)
03-28-15	Sat	Richmond North Bay Sail (<i>Neil</i>)
04-11-15	Sat	Oakland Estuary Sail & Strictly Sail Boat Show, April 9-12 (<i>Pat</i>)
04-18-15	Sat	Benicia Sail (<i>Goose</i>)
05-02-15	Sat-Sun	Moss Landing/Elkhorn Yacht Club Sail & Overnight (<i>Mike/Bud</i>)
05-23-15	Sat-Sun	Delta Overnight Sail from B & W Resort (<i>Jerry B</i>)
06-06-15	Sat-Sun	Woodward Reservoir Campout (<i>Rich</i>)
06-20-15	Sat	Lake Hennessey (<i>Don/Carl</i>)
06-27-15	Sat	Oakland Estuary Sail (<i>Kevin</i>)
07-18-15	Sat-Sun	Cruiser Challenge XV and Dory Taylor Memorial Sail Weekend (<i>Goose</i>) [*]
08-01-15	Sat	(Dinghy Delta Ditch Run – Rio Vista to Lake Washington) ^{**}
08-08-15	Sat	Richmond-SF Bay/Angel Island Day Sail (<i>Neil</i>)
08-29-15	Sat	(Huntington Lake?) ^{**}
09-05-15	Sat	Clipper Cove (<i>Carl</i>)
09-12-15	Sat	The "Open to Suggestions" Sail [Bring your proposal to the Annual Meeting]
09-26-15	Sat-Sun	Tomaes Bay Overnight (<i>Eric</i>)
10-03-15	Sat-Sun	Moss Landing to Monterey Sail & Overnight (<i>Mike</i>)
10-17-15	Sat-Sun	Delta Eight Bridges Sail and Overnight (<i>Bud</i>)

* Date subject to confirmation and availability

** A non-Potter Yachter event, and subject to confirmation

Consistent with the principle of positional momentum (one of the unwritten rules of the Potter Yachters), last year's sail hosts are listed as this year's sail hosts. Please let me know if anyone can't serve or if the date doesn't work, and if possible try to arrange a replacement. Also, these dates have not been checked against the tide charts yet, so if you see a problem, please let me know. As you know, the Potter Yachters run on "Volunteer Power," so don't hesitate to offer to "take up an oar" and volunteer to host a sail or offer to take a post with the "Central Committee" of the Club by letting the Commodore know or at the Annual Meeting. This Club is the longstanding success that it is precisely because our members are the kind of people who step up to the plate" and make it happen.

Speaking of positional momentum, this has been my third and final year serving as your Commodore and I have thoroughly enjoyed it and thank everyone for making it a fantastic, fun, and memorable three years. Stay tuned at the Annual Meeting. See you there! – 

Club Events on the Horizon

January 18, 2015 - The Annual Meeting of the Potter Yachters

We're planning to hold our yearly meeting at the Oakland Yacht Club on Sunday.

Breakfast at 9am, meeting around 10am (Potter Time) in the Regatta Room. See Page 1.

This tale is about a trip I took several years ago. After this trip, I became a volunteer at the Los Angeles Maritime Institute at San Pedro and completed several one-week tours as a crew member aboard a square rigger. Unfortunately, the trip to San Pedro was too inconvenient to remain a volunteer. -Pat



ONE WEEK BEFORE THE MAST

A somewhat off-topic tale of a voyage aboard a square-rigger

by Pat Brennan

“Hands to braces”
“Prepare to brace square”
“Cast off and haul”^{}*

Without some experience on a square rigger, even the saltiest Potter Yachter won’t recognize these commands. But after a week on board a brigantine, they became almost second nature to me. I recently completed a most enjoyable cruise aboard the *Irving Johnson*, a 90’ brigantine owned and operated by the [Los Angeles Maritime Institute \(LAMI\)](#) in San Pedro, California.

Thirteen passengers and eleven crew members gathered on the deck of the *Irving Johnson* on a Friday afternoon. We passengers had signed up for an “Adventures Under Sail” one-week cruise organized by Road Scholar. We had been told that we would have a short orientation, then stow our gear, have dinner, retire early and then get underway early Saturday morning. We had also been told that the actual itinerary and schedule were completely up to the captain. We were then introduced to the captain who announced that we would be getting underway immediately and would motor north all night. This would permit us to take advantage of the prevailing winds as we sailed south through the Channel Islands.

We were under way before 6:00 pm and motored out to sea. We turned north and the captain set a course that would take us to Anacapa Island. I got my first chance to get a feel for the ship when I took the helm after we had been motoring for a few hours. One thing that a small boat sailor finds disconcerting is that there is a definite disconnect between cause and effect. Everything happens slooowly. At the helm, the ship starts to drift slowly off course. You turn the wheel a spoke or two as you were told to do and nothing happens. So you turn some more, and then some more, until the course begins to correct. Now the ship returns to the correct course and continues to turn as you swing the wheel frantically in the opposite direction. You steer a snake-like course until you learn to wait for the ship to respond.

Sailing on a square rigger is not like sailing a Potter for another reason. It is an exercise in teamwork, where not just one or two crewmembers are required for a maneuver, but as many as a dozen. You can be a good crewmember and know nothing about sailing; you just need to be able to follow orders. “Barring captains and mates of big ships, the small-boat sailor is the real sailor. . . . He must know about tides and rips and eddies, bar and channel markings, and day and night signals; he must be wise in weather-lore; and he must be sympathetically familiar with the peculiar qualities of his boat which differentiate it from every other boat that was ever built and rigged. He must know how to gentle her about . . . and to fill her on the other tack without deadening her way or allowing her to fall off too far. The deepwater sailor . . . needs to know none of these things. And he doesn't. He pulls and hauls as he is ordered, swabs decks, washes paint, and chips iron-rust. He knows nothing, and cares less. Put him in a small boat and he is helpless.” This assessment from Jack London’s “Small Boat Sailing” is a bit harsh but has a definite element of truth to it.

^{*} For those of you who want an explanation, *braces* are the lines that control the horizontal angle of the yards; *bracing square* means to adjust the braces so that the yards are at right angles to the centerline of the ship. The braces are simultaneously eased on one side of the ship and hauled in on the other.

The command structure aboard ship was informal and was never explained completely to us. We knew that Steve was the captain, the first mate was a young woman who preferred the nickname, “Fez”, over her rather ordinary first name, and Bill was the Road Scholar cruise director. One other crew member we quickly got to know was Zack, the nineteen year old cook. Our first meal consisted of grilled cheese sandwiches and soup – about what we had been told to expect. However, the first night at anchor we were served pistachio encrusted halibut with mango and papaya salsa. It turned out that Zack was a recent graduate of the California Culinary Academy and was earning some sailing time to qualify for a Coast Guard license by volunteering with LAMI. He amazed us with the meals he was able to produce with the help of his self-styled “galley goddess”, Nanette. His final effort on our last night aboard was a complete turkey dinner: two roast turkeys, mashed potatoes and gravy, dressing, mixed vegetables, cranberry sauce and apple pie. The exact status of the remaining six crew members was never explained.

One thing never stated explicitly though abundantly clear was that Steve was in complete charge. One morning as we were at anchor, food was being hauled up from the galley and placed on the serving area amidships. Steve wandered forward from the wheel and simply said, “I feel wind!” Immediately, without a word of protest or even a comment, the food was returned to the galley and the crew prepared to weigh anchor.

While not required, the passengers were encouraged to help sail the ship, and we all did. We were split into three watches and stood four hour tours. A watch was split into four parts. During a watch we rotated between: bow watch, responsible for reporting sightings of any possible hazards, including large clumps of kelp; the helm, responsible for sailing the course dictated by the captain; and navigation, which took readings every half hour of GPS coordinates, sea and weather conditions, course steered, and speed, then plotted our location and updated the log. The fourth group, termed ‘idle’ was responsible for inspecting the ship every half hour – this included inspecting the bilge, the engine room, the galley and crew quarters, and insuring that the water tight doors were closed and dogged. The idle group was also available to run errands for the captain and mates. Those not standing watch tended lines for sail changes and course changes. We were also invited to climb the ratlines to help furl the square sails (the top of the mainmast is 104’ above the water) and to go out on the bowsprit to furl the jibs.



Captain Steve, Cook Zack, Crewmember Jochin and First Mate Fez



First Mate Fez catches up on her sleep after standing anchor watch.



When faced with almost ninety control lines, it pays to “know the ropes.” Most of these lines control the “course”, the largest of the square sails.

Road Scholar billed the cruise as a learning experience that “nurtures the development of necessary sailing knowledge, skills and attitudes” and the cruise delivered on that goal. The learning was mostly from participation in sailing the ship although there were usually lectures after the evening meal. Captain Steve had a very practical way of teaching us some of the fundamentals of operating the ship. His talk after dinner one day explained chart reading, how to take fixes and use of dead reckoning (or *deduced*

reckoning, for you purists). The next morning at our 8:00 AM meeting when we were told of Steve's plans for the day, he announced that our electronics had failed. However, the weather looked good so we would set sail from our anchorage at Santa Barbara Island to Catalina and navigate by dead reckoning. We used a hand bearing compass to get a fix and measured 60' on the deck so we could time how long a marker thrown into the water took to pass by the ship to estimate our speed. For markers we used biscuits – they floated, were easy to see, were biodegradable, and Zack always prepared more than we could eat. We plotted a DR every half-hour and as we approached Catalina Harbor later in the day we were quite comfortable with dead reckoning. The electronics mysteriously came back to life and we found that our DR position was 0.4 nm away from our actual position.

On another evening, Steve used a simple wooden model of a brigantine without sails but with masts and spars to explain some of the basics of maneuvering a square rigger. He explained how the center of effort could be moved by changing the set of the mainsail to cause the ship to begin turning. He also showed how the yards could be adjusted gradually as the ship came about to keep the square sails filled while the ship settled on the new tack. The next afternoon we planned to anchor in Catalina's Twin Harbor and found that with a strong offshore breeze it would be necessary to tack if we were to sail onto our anchorage – and Steve always sailed on and off anchor. Four quick tacks later and we were at anchor after a practical demonstration of the previous evening's talk.

LAMI's Sail Training Program

A fascinating part of the voyage was seeing how a group of strangers, many without any sailing experience, could be thrown together and in a few days form a reasonably competent crew. The trip, in addition to being a practical lesson in sailing, was a great example of team building.

That brings us to the real reason for the LAMI sail training program. This Road Scholar cruise was just filler for LAMI during school vacation; the mission of LAMI's "[TopSail Youth Program](#)" is to use sail training to provide young people with real-life challenges that develop knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to live healthy, productive lives. The cruises are designed to "encourage and foster the growth of awareness, understanding, communication, cooperation and teamwork, along with the maturation of their attitudes regarding persistence, patience, endurance, courage and caution." Steve and other crew members talked with enthusiasm about the transformation they could see in kids in just a week. They arrive typically from South Central LA with sagging pants, lots of gold chains and lots of attitude. Kids who have never even seen the ocean before are on a ship beyond the sight of land where it is essential to work as a team to sail the ship, but where they initially have no idea of what is going on. The change in just one week is dramatic and apparently lasting. The high school drop-out rate for one middle school group was actually tracked and it turned out to be less than 5%.

All in all it was a most worthwhile and enjoyable cruise. – 

p.s. On a sad note, four days after I left the ship, the *Irving Johnson* ran aground while attempting to enter a harbor at Oxnard, about sixty miles north of Los Angeles. Initial reports were that it had struck an uncharted sand bar and was stranded in strong surf. All twenty passengers and crew were forced to abandon ship by jumping



overboard. Fortunately, they were all rescued by small boats and PWCs sent out from Oxnard. I guess the moral, if any, is that no matter how skillful, well-equipped and well-prepared you are, the unexpected can always take you by surprise. Sailing in any boat is not without risk.

The Official 2015 Potter Yachter Calendars will be ordered on Jan. 10th. If you request in time, you can pick it up at the annual meeting for \$10 per copy, or you can have calendars mailed to you for \$15 each. If you wish to receive your calendars at the meeting, just send an email to me (pat-brennan@sbcglobal.net) advising me of the number you want reserved. If you wish them mailed to you, send your check made payable to me to:

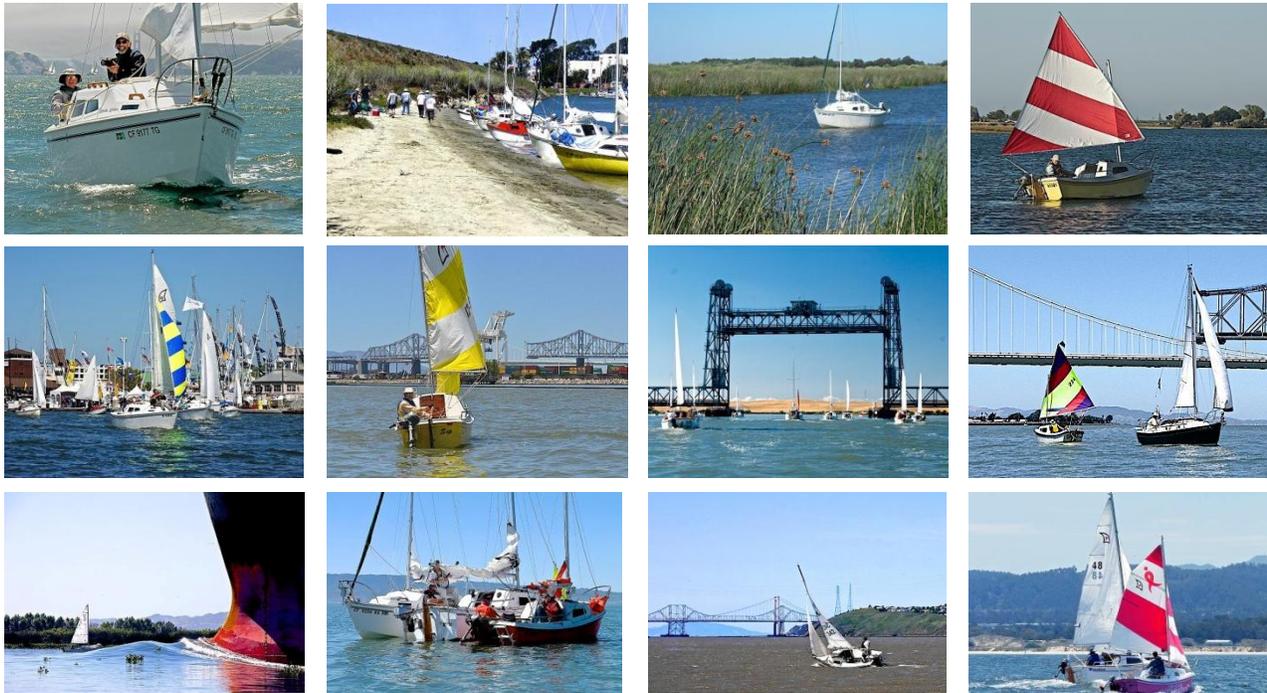
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Remember, there will be a limited amount printed and requests will be filled in the order received. Thumbnails (below) and cover photo (right) should give you a hint of the quality of the calendar.

Patrick Brennan, Secretary/Treasurer



Cover of the 2015 Calendar -- Order yours today!



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Worthy Photos That Almost Made It Into The Calendar



Potter Yachter Membership

Join the *Potter Yachters* – the club that has been around since 1978 and, with your participation, will continue to withstand the test of time. We’re really a bunch of nice folks who would just love to have other nice folks join us. Your dues help support club activities and publish the newsletter, so you’ll be sure to know when we’re out sailing, whether that’s in the San Juan Islands, Monterey, the SF Bay, or elsewhere. Annual dues are \$25. Make checks payable to “Pat Brennan”.

Send your payment (with your name and address) to:

Pat Brennan
1305 Webster Street #C205
Alameda CA, 94501

See us online at: www.potter-yachters.org

Organized in Northern California in 1978, the *Potter Yachters* is the longest running West Wight Potter club. Membership is open to anyone interested in West Wight Potters and other trailerable microcruiser sailboats.



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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*

