



The Potter Yachter

Newsletter of the Northern California West Wight Potter Club

October 2007

CRISTOPHER COLUMBUS



“We have spotted land! I have named it San Salvador. I believe that Japan is only a short distance to the west.” Sailor, navigator, visionary genius, adventurer. . .

The Commodore's Log

September was another super month for sailing. All The Usual Suspects made their way north for the fifth annual Messabout in the Pacific Northwest, and, by all reports, the overnighiter on Tomales Bay was very successful.

The Suspects launched from Ladysmith on Friday, September 7, and made the 15 NM run to Silva Bay on Gabriola Island. The eight boats had to punch into a strong headwind and, as Tim Derry said, "It got snotty" out there. After spending an extra day at Silva Bay, the winds died down and the Suspects met some very interesting folks, including Rosemarie and John, the owners of the "Gladimaris," the 112 year-old, 36-foot gaff-rigged topsail cutter they live on. The weather cooperated for the next seven days as the Suspects made their way through the Gulf Islands, and a few of the Suspects were seen sailing in shorts and T-shirts. Other than a bout with morning fog one day, it only rained on the last day. As usual, the Canadians were wonderful hosts. I guess we will have to do it again.

Contrary to one rumor, the only requirement to become a Suspect is to demonstrate you've slipped a mental cog when it comes to sailing. Normally, this can be done by joining the Wednesday regulars or going on a Messabout; however, other demonstrations of sailing addiction are acceptable.

Seven skippers made the Tomales Bay overnighiter on the last weekend in the month. I hope you saw the photos on potter-pod.com and read Carl Sundholms's report. It must have been great making the acquaintance of a gray whale.

I'm looking forward to the Monterey sail on 13 and 14 October. The folks there roll out the welcome mat and October has always been a good month for sailing. Mike Swartz is getting it organized and can be contacted at michaellswartz@yahoo.com or 831-801-1788.

UP COMING EVENTS:

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

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

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Next Year

Okay, so I'm anal and like to plan ahead. With that understanding, please bear with me for a few words.

Maybe you've noticed that we tend to do the same events about the same time every year. There is a reason for this as those events have been very successful in the past and we can't come up with new ideas. I would like to have a planning and scheduling meeting prior to the annual meeting in January so we can have some proposals for the membership to cogitate on at the meeting. Please let me know of any ideas/suggestions/etc. you might have.

As of now, here are some events that I'm thinking of.

January: annual meeting at the Oakland Yacht Club (they seem to like us).

April: An overnigher at the Oakland Yacht Club the weekend of Strictly Sail with a Sunday sail on the Estuary.

May: A Delta Sail/Woodward Lake campout.

June: Eagle Lake campout.

July: First, a rendezvous at Granville Island for the 4th of July fireworks show. With a little arm twisting, we might get a mother ship but this will take some planning and coordination. Second, the Ninth Cruiser Challenge at Monterey. The Monterey Peninsula Yacht Club said they would like us back and if I can shanghai the planning committee again. . . . ? I know this would be a big month with two major events, so should we try it?

September: Another Messabout to the Northwest and the Tomales Bay overnigher.

Finally, the same folks have been carrying the ball as Sail Hosts, etc. We can use some new blood.

Dick Herman

Commodore

Sailing the Northwest Passage

It was reported recently by Kathryn Westcott of BBC News, that the shrinking of the Arctic ice had opened the fabled Northwest Passage, clearing a long sought, but until recently impassable route between Europe and Asia. There has been a marked shrinkage in ice cover in the region in recent years, but this year it was extreme, according to Europe's space agency.

Norwegian explorer Roald Amundsen became the first person to successfully navigate the Northwest passage in 1905, in a wooden sail boat. Since then about 110 boats have successfully completed the trip. Once the journey could have taken years, with sailors being forced to overwinter in ports along the passage due to the ice condition. This year it was possible to complete the journey in record time.

Roger Swanson, a pig farmer turned yachtsman from Minnesota, completed the journey in 45 day. Roger received the "Blue Water Medal" from the Cruising Club of America, for compiling impressive long distance sailing records. Roger has written about his adventures in, *Into the ice*.

http://www.sailingbreezes.com/Sailing_Breezes_Current/Articles/Oct07/Swanson-NWPassage.htm



Carl Sundholm and Dagmar, Tomalas Bay

Happy Birthday Jerry

SAILING THE SAN ANDREAS FAULT

By Carl Sundholm

On the morning of September 29, 2007, the sleepy town of Inverness watched quietly as a small fleet of diverse vehicles towed their West Wight Potters along Sir Francis Drake Boulevard to the Golden Hinde Inn, with each skipper anticipating a great sail and overnight on Tomales Bay.

The early birds docked their boats, waiting for the other boats to set up and for the rising tide so that all the fleet could set sail together.



All counted, the P-15s included Fleet Captain Don Person and skippers Dave Bacon, Dave Kautz, and Steve Potter, and the P-19s were represented by Fleet Captain Dave White, Charlie Davison, and yours truly, Carl Sundholm. This was my first time sailing Tomales Bay, and it was one of the best outings yet.

Perhaps it was even fortunate that the usual east side launching ramp of Miller Park was closed due to a construction makeover, because launching from the Golden Hinde Inn provided a place to dock the boats as well as the opportunity to eat a civilized pre-camping lunch at Barnaby's Restaurant.

There was only a mild breeze as the crabs were scurrying out of the way as I prepared to back Dagmar down the ramp, and Dave White remarked that he wished there was a little more wind. By the time lunch was over and everyone was ready to go, his wish was granted.

Heading for our destination of Tomales Beach (just north of Marshall Beach) from the Golden Hinde Inn presented an upwind tacking trip of what seemed like well over ten broad tacks into moderate to strong winds coming down the chute of Tomales Bay from the northwest.



The P-15 skippers were especially impressive in their ability to handle the upwind trip quickly and to effortlessly travel at an angle much closer to the wind with

(Continued on page 5)



significantly fewer tacks than I was able to manage in my P-19 Dagmar. Watching the more experienced Potter skip-pers sail gives you a real appreciation of the skills that come with "tiller time," as Don Person so aptly phrased it.



It was late afternoon by the time my tacking zig zag sail up Tomales Bay placed me within striking range of the beach where the other Potters had landed. I wrestled down the wind-whipped sails and started the outboard. Then, remembering the advice Dave White gave to this first time beacher back at the docks, I pulled up all but about a foot of the center-board to keep the boat from blowing sideways, loosened the kick-up rudder, and gunned the outboard to successfully get the bow of the boat up on the beach.

After finishing raising the centerboard, cleaning off the eelgrass, and securing the boat to the beach with the anchor

and rode, I folded out my camping chair and joined the others at the beach camp.

At one point the conversation turned to the fact that the reason that Tomales Bay was so straight, long, and narrow was because it was formed by the north by northwesterly movement along the underlying San Andreas Fault of the Pacific Plate sliding under the North American Plate. So it was a bit bizarre to realize that we had in effect been sailing on the San Andreas Fault. As it turns out, this fault movement accounts for the ragged higher cliffs and deeper depths on the west side. Some geologists believe this area was the epicenter of the San Francisco 1906 earthquake. One can only wonder what Tomales Bay must have looked like on that day.

As the conversation went on, someone looked up and notice that the falling tide had left Dave White's Wee Boat a wee bit landlocked.

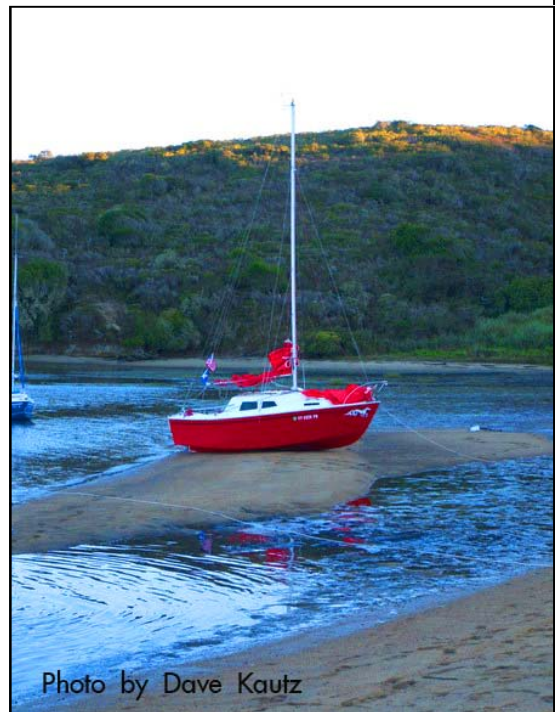


Photo by Dave Kautz



Photo by Don Person

I learned a few things on this trip. For one thing, I learned that when your boat is becoming beached on a falling tide, you need to take your rudder

pintles out of the gudgeons right away. Otherwise the weight of the settling boat will push the attached rudder down into the sand to make it unremovable and will likely damage the rudder or the gudgeons. I was able to pry my rudder out of gudgeons before much

(Continued from page 5)

damage occurred. It's a good thing I got that centerboard all the way up too. It's the little things that can get you.

Another lesson learned is that, while P-19 owners tend to pack by stuffing things into the quarterberths, it is better to organize your packing so that the things you will use while camping will be readily available when and where you need them. After fumbling around in the dark and pulling bag after bag out of the quarterberths looking for a flashlight, coat, and the things you need at dinner and bedtime, I resolved that next time I pack for an overnight I will strategically pack those items in a place where I can easily reach them when I need them. The things you will need on shore should be readily available so that you can easily reach them through the forward hatch while standing on the beach (such as a flashlight, camera, coat, and campfire or dinner-related items) or through the companionway door, which may require you climbing up on deck and walking back to the cockpit.



The pot-luck dinner was excellent, and Don Person's chili was superb. Somehow food cooked outdoors after a day of sailing is just tastier.

It seems like nearly everyone brought fire-wood and that was a good thing. As the night air grew colder under the nearly full moon, we stoked the campfire.

The warmth and the light from the dancing flames of the campfire provided a fitting atmosphere for the interesting conversations that lasted long into the night, with especially skilled storytelling by the three Daves.

When we finally decided to call it a night, I headed back for the boat to figure out how I was going to approach to the new experience of sleeping overnight on a P-19, and will pass on some of the lessons I learned. The first thing I noticed was that the high freeboard of the P-19 makes for a high step to clamber onto and off of the bow of the boat when it is beached. Bringing a short step ladder or step stool would make it easier to get aboard and ashore with a beached boat. Another thing is that a beached boat slopes noticeably downward from bow to stern, and if you don't like sleeping with your head downhill, your head will need to be up by the bow. I had also heard that some folks sleeping head forward in the v-berth of the P-19 have problems with condensation dripping from the ceiling or feeling a little claustrophobic with the low headroom, but for me keeping the forward hatch open to watch the stars solved both problems.



I actually slept much better than I thought I would. As the tide began to come up during the night, from time to time I would wake up hearing the relaxing rhythm of the water lapping up closer and closer to the bow, and go back to sleep.

Then the morning came, I popped my head up out of the forward hatch and saw that the rising tide has freed the bows of some of the smaller boats from the beach, and understood why many of them anchored off the stern as well as tying the bow to the shore, to keep them from drifting sideways with the rising tide. I saw that folks were out and about getting

(Continued on page 7)

(Continued from page 6)

organized for the coming day, and roused myself to do likewise.



After being warmed up by the rising sun and by some coffee with breakfast, the tide had risen sufficiently to free the remaining beached boats and it was time to clean-up and get going. So we struck camp and headed out.

The mild initial morning breezes on the trip back provided an exceptionally leisurely downwind return sail and allowed me the opportunity to see a most spectacular sight.

On the west side of Tomales Bay, I saw a group of kayakers on what I believe was Laird's Landing beach looking intently offshore. As I sailed closer to see what they were looking at, I saw the head of a juvenile gray whale pop out of the water close to the shore and look straight at them! I quickly fumbled for my camera to attempt a "quick draw" and blindly snapped away

without focusing, just hoping that I'd be lucky enough to get just one decent head shot as he was going back under the water. I didn't know until I got back home and looked at the photos that I got this photo of the young gray whale's head and mouth still out of the water!

The whale's head looked to be about 8-10 feet long, which is pretty immense. It was a beautiful thing to see. As the whale receded into the bay, one of the kayakers said "I guess he's bored with us now."

I saw the young whale's as he surfaced on his way finally disappeared, leav-paddling kayakers cir-for just one more look.

After returning to the ranger who told me that it gray whales occasionally Tomales Bay for short migrations in the open

This is a truly magnifi-night sail which can proble experiences, pleasant photos.



back a few more times by my boat, before he ing myself and a few cling around hoping

dock, I spoke with a is not unusual to see taking refuge in vacation from their sea.

cent place for an over-vide you with memora-surprises, and fantastic

It's not to late, to Potter

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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*