



The Potter Yachter

Newsletter of the Northern California West Wight Potter Club

September 2006

Sailing & Event Calendar 2006

Sept. 5 to 20. Usual Suspects
North to Puget Sound. (FYI) for
experienced sailors only.

Sept. 30 & Oct. 1, Tomales Bay
Weekend.

Oct. 14 & 15, Monterey Weekend

Nov. 11, Day Sail, Emeryville,
Day on the Bay.

Angel Island



Looking toward Angel Island 9/2.

Jerry Kergan

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TOMALES BAY WEEKEND

The Tomales Bay weekend is scheduled for September 30 through October 1st. The weather should be great for camping and sailing, with mild fall conditions. High water at the Tomales Bay entrance is predicted for about 9:15 am. should you want to sail over the bar. This activity, however, is not recommended due to sneaker waves. Using your trailer is the best way to go, and faster too! If you have Map Quest you can get directions by using Tony's Sea Food at 18663 Highway 1 in Marshal as a destination.

The boat ramp is located at Miller Park ,3 miles north on Highway 1. You will need at least one five dollar bill to deposit in the machine for parking. Camping and rendezvous will be about 3 miles south east, on the west side of the bay. In my opinion this is one of the more interesting events on the Potter schedule. Hope to see you there!

Mike Dolan, P15 Lizzie D

Two Trips to Angel Island

I am a little intimidated thinking about sailing on the San Francisco Bay, since I put in most of my sailing time on a lake. I sail amid skiers, not ships, barges and large sailboats. I don't sail where the tides create mud flats and the current can carry you miles from where you want to be. But twice in the past month I have been to Richmond for the club outings, both to Angel Island.

"Raccoon Straight, is a tricky place to sail". I have heard this since the first time I went to a Potter meeting and this is where I am going. Well it wasn't bad going into Ayala Cove. It was busy with larger boats getting all they could out of the wind. Going back to Richmond that day was a thrilling ride. Pushed by the wind and knocked about by the chop it was not a time to relax and enjoy the scenery.

Needless to say I was a bit reluctant to make the trip again on September 2, but Janet did not get to go on the first trip, so she was excited to sail on the bay. It started the same with overcast sky, clearing about noon. On this day the winds never came up like the previous trip. We enjoyed a little lunch with the other Potters that went that day. Janet loves to read the plaques that tell about wildlife and history, so the museum satisfied her interest. The homeward course was very enjoyable, letting us take in all of the sights of being on the bay.

It will take more trips to the San Francisco Bay to become more at ease with tides currents and mud flats but it is nice to get away from the skiers.

Mike Dolan, P15 Lizzie D, Editor



San Francisco Bay, Potter Yachters heading to Angel Island , August 19. The return trip was not as pleasant.
Photo by Don Person

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Sonoma Lake Overnight

Story and photos by Jerry Kergan

A Google Search of the Potter Yachter website & news letters turned up only a couple of references to Lake Sonoma. I had the opportunity to sail this lake a couple of weeks ago, and submit my impressions for the news letter:

Friday June 16th, daughter Jen was doing sleep-over with girl friends in Santa Rosa; so instead of making the 150 mile round trip twice in as many days, I decided to take Lazy Ka along, get in a little sailing, and spend the night at Lake Sonoma some 30 miles beyond.

After checking in at the park visitor's center, paying my fees (\$14 one night camping * launch,) and being assigned a lakeside "Boat-in" campsite, I was directed to the launch ramp. I arrived at the launch ramp a little after 2:00 PM. I found that the ramp is separate from the parking lot by a couple of hundred yards and an overhead bridge with a 16' vertical clearance. A fact that means trailerable sail boats of any size must "rig" on the ramp. The good news is that there is plenty of room on the ramp to allow temporary parking to rig.

On the water, the prevailing afternoon winds from the north-west were a total surprise as I moved from behind the



protection of hill, where the ramp is located, into the Dry Creek Arm of the reservoir. I was greeted by conditions that were more characteristic of San Francisco Bay than my expectations for Lake Sonoma. Winds were easily in the 12-15 knot range with frequent gusts. My course up the canyon required frequent tacks, but constant headway was made. By the time I had covered the estimated 3 miles to my assigned campground, winds had increased to a gusty 15-18 knots driving consistent 2 foot swells. In these wind conditions, the blow comes down a canyon framed by steep hillsides of over 1000 feet; variations on the canyon walls generate eddies and constant changes in apparent wind direction requir-

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ing complete attention to duty at all times. There were very few power boats on the lake by this time, and I was the sole sailboat.

A bit after 7:00 PM, with winds still building, I've safely put into a protected inlet, secured Lazy Ka, and set out to explore. My assigned campsite was located in the Falcon's Nest campground; 7 sites total on a peninsula framed by two sheltered inlets on the south-west side of the canyon. I first sailed beyond the peninsula in search of the best protection from the winds, only to drop back to the leeward side as it offered better shelter and had a soft beach as well. I broke out my easy chair, a snack, and consumed copious quantities of water. The campground was a gentle climb from the beach. At the top, some sites were exposed, but all were sheltered from the winds still evident by the numerous whitecaps on the reservoir. Not since a family camping vacation to Oregon in the 1950's have I seen a park where the gathering of "downed or dead" wood for fires is permitted. At Falcon's Nest there were large piles of kindling and sawn rounds ready to be split for burning. Each campsite has a Fire Ring, table, garbage can and a fixed pole for hanging a lantern. Facilities



consist of his and hers chemical vault toilets. Except for a deer that paid me a visit, on this night, I had the whole campground to myself.

As dusk settled in, so did I to a meal of barbecued Polish before going back aboard Lazy Ka for the night. Saturday morning I awoke at 5:00 AM to the sound of several high speed fishing boats headed up the reservoir for the shallows. I got up, did a little housekeeping, and scouted around the area a bit more while water came to a boil for my morning coffee. The winds had reseeded to a very comfortable 4-6 knots. With breakfast finished, I was on the water by 6:00 AM.

My plan for the day was to Sail on up the reservoir to check out some of the other campgrounds. By 11:00 Am I was in the upper reservoir, off the Rustler Campground, within sight of the York Creek swimming and picnic (Day Use) area some six or seven miles above the boat ramp. Shallow waters sheltered from winds make this part of the reservoir attractive to canoes and kayaks, but not my li'l Potter. The entire upper reservoir is designated a "No Wake" zone. Some slow sailing in these upper reaches allowed brief conversations with a camper onshore, a former Potter owner turned canoeist, and a couple of kayakers who paddled by.

The only challenge in getting to Rustler with the light winds was the ever-constant changes in direction and intensity encountered as I tacked back and forth up the valley. The upper reservoir offers



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several tributary creeks and valleys that feed the lake. Morning winds were coming down the through these valleys creating a change in wind direction around each bend. This all made for regular changes in tack and sail trim from one side of the narrowing reservoir to the other.

Unlike most other man-made lakes, the Army Corps of Engineers chose to leave trees in the reservoir as it filled. While this decision is beneficial to creating a great Bass fishery, it complicates Sailing. The skipper must be on constant alert for submerged obstacles. I found that I was able to sail into close proximity to evident trees without mishap, the exception being one brush of my keel with a submerged tree branch.

The locations of the campgrounds seem to have been selected with protected shore access a consideration. Each has one or more sheltered coves for easy access. The beaches that I observed are boat-bottom friendly being mostly silt rather than sand . . . they seemed very soft. My return to the ramp was slow and steady until I arrived about a half mile out at which point the winds died away, not to return for me. I motored about in search of a breeze for a short time. Giving up a little after 1:00 PM, I headed in to pack up and return to Santa Rosa to pickup Jen.

A couple of closing observations:

1. Upon returning to the ramp early Saturday afternoon, I found considerable congestion. The competition for limited dock space frustrated my need to tie up before walking the 200 yards up to the parking lot where I had left my car. The dock only accommodates 5 or 6 boats at a time. Upon returning to the ramp in my car, I had to queue up behind a half dozen other vehicles waiting to launch or recover. The good news is that boaters got on with their business quickly, and I was only delayed 10 minutes or so.
2. Lake Sonoma has a reputation for being unfriendly to sailboats for all the powerboat activity. I was told by staff, when I checked in, that sailors more frequently come in during the week only to bail out for the weekend powerboat crowd. I found that waterskiing is restricted to the lower reservoir where there is considerably more room to maneuver and no blind spots as are found in the more irregular upper reservoir. As I put in at the peak of afternoon waterskiing, I found the turbulence at the dock to be considerable and challenging to my efforts to secure Lazy Ka at the dock. Fenders are an absolute must have! An earthen breakwater, that I expect would offer some protection later in the season, was flooded by the high lake level on my June visit.



The bottom line is that I will give Lake Sonoma another try some time in the future. The great camping was well worth the minor inconveniences. For more information on Lake Sonoma, consult the Army Corps of Engineers website at <http://www.spn.usace.army.mil/lakesonoma/index.htm>.

Calling all reporters...if you have explored an interesting lake, river or bay with your Potter, tells us about it. Send your story and photos to the Editors of Potter Yachter Newsletter.

The Usual Suspects are sailing the San Juan Islands of Washington this week. Next month we should have a report of this years adventures. We hope they are enjoying new sites and have a safe trip on the water and on the highway.

Patrick Brennan
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Pat Brennan and Eaglet, San Francisco Bay.

Photo by Don Person

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*