



# Potter to Potter

NOR CAL. W.W.P. NEWS



JULY 1980

## THE JULY SAIL

The Woodward Reservoir sail was simply wonderful! Ten Potters were present: the Adair family in #567; Leighton Johe in #773; Harry and Jeff Gordon in #234; the Nelsons in #584; the Bernreuters in #817; the Marsh's in #512; Fred Richter (a new member) in #783; the Butlers in #850 and the Simpsons in #266. The Barrilleaux family was also present, but left #564 at home.

Woodward is a very large lake, with lots of coves and beaches. The winds are excellent and the people we met there were very friendly. We had two great days of sailing, and in the evening we sat around a roaring campfire, toasted marshmallows and drank some good wine. In fact, everyone had such a great time that we decided to do it again next month, SO.....

## NEXT SAIL

AUGUST 2&3 WOODWARD RESERVOIR

If you blew it and missed the July sail, you have another chance..... Launch at 10:00 a.m. or whenever you get there. Look for the sign telling where we are camped, and if you can't find one then you are probably the first one there. See the June newsletter for directions. See you there!

## A WORD FOR JIM AND CAROL

It is difficult to find words of appreciation for the effort Carol and Jim Mangles exerted in organizing the Potter Yachters group. It was Carol who carried the burden of corresponding, organizing, and making up the newsletter from the inception of the club until now. Without question, this was a labor of love that grew into a job which needed to be shared by others. Today the club is a going concern of active sailors with many of it's activities family oriented. A more friendly, helpful group of people would be hard to imagine. To Jim and Carol, what more can we say other than "THANK YOU" for a job well done.

## SAN DIEGO BOUND ARIZONA POTTERS

The Arizona club has along weekend planned for Sept. 26th thru 29th at San Diego. We are looking for more details, but it sounds like fun. The Butlers have tentative plans to join them. Any of you other Bay Area Potters interested?

## WE NEED YOUR ARTICLES

If you have any information of interest, or articles on Potters, please send them to me and I will see that they get printed in future newsletters.

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CRUISING DOWN THE RIVER

Sacramento to Pittsburg  
June 20-22, 1980

It wasn't an official Potter Yachter event, yet there were-- eight Potters--all beating down the Sacramento River.

When Stan Butler and De Marsh mentioned at Bel Marin Keys that they were going to sail from Sacramento to Pittsburg, they were surprised to see how many Potter Yachters were enthusiastic about what Stan and De had considered a rather far-out idea. But, never intending to keep a good thing to themselves, they sent out the word for anyone interested to join them. It was short notice but the turnout was impressive. Following are some impressions of the trip, from the cockpit of Manatee.

Friday Night - The last of the eight Potters depart the Sacramento Miller Park launch ramp about 8:30 pm...running lights on, sun down but not dark yet...tacking down the river against a light breeze, but each tack a long stride, thanks to the 2-knot downriver current... pleasant relaxed sailing...daylight faded now, but plenty of light from bright half moon in a clear sky...left bank lined with trees, but further ahead the trees end and the bank becomes bare and rocky-- hope the leading boats will tie up before they are past the trees... they do; what a good group are the Potter Yachters!...anchor in cockpit ready to go...a few more tacks and I'm approaching the cluster of boats secured delta style, anchors astern and bows tied to trees... need one more tack...no, I don't; current is carrying me exactly where I want to go...drop anchor now...rode pays out smoothly over the rail until Manatee's board hits the muddy shore...pull centerboard up... someone ties my bow to a tree...adjacent boat is Stan Butler's Ooh No!...cleat the anchor, furl sails, coil lines, break out flashlight, check food supplies--enough food for a week (thanks, Sandy)... for now, a smoked turkey sandwich and a glass of Stan's wine...chat with Stan and with De Marsh, who is standing in the water up to his thighs. De works at NAS Alameda; Stan at the Stanford Linear Accelerator...wake from passing stinkpot tosses boats about and wets more of De than he had intended, but stern anchors prevent boats from smashing together...negligible traffic on the river the rest of the night--no more tidal waves...no wind either--river is peaceful, beautiful...moon shines in my face through the open hatch as I lie in my sleeping bag. (Does it have to be a full moon to cause "lunacy"?)

Saturday Morning - An early start; bright sunlight wakens me well before someone sounds reveille with a short beep of his freon horn... breakfast is instant coffee--water heated on Sterno-- and cereal and milk eaten from the little Kellogg's bowl-packs to avoid dirty dishes... gear stowed, lines cast off, anchors weighed...again tacking down the river in a light wind, still pushed by a friendly current...river banks are levees with rocks at the water line...Potters strung out along the river--most of the Mk IIs up front--Terry Gotcher in his sloop John B, Stan's Ooh No!, Don Bergst in Ms.B, Charlie Nearings red boat-- followed by Frank Winans' gunter-rigged Sweetheart II. In back with Manatee are Bill Wight's Isle of Wight and De Marsh's Ipo. Everyone is single handed...I monitor progress against the charts by noting the numbered navigation markers and the names of marinas we pass...we're mostly tacking, occasionally reaching...I try to stay near the middle

of the river where the current is strongest and the wind more constant...front boats out of sight now and we have many miles to travel--time to fire up the Seagull and catch up with the pack...De does the same, but Bill Wight continues sailing....

Saturday Afternoon - 2 p.m.--have not stopped for lunch...with the boats strung out along the river there has been little communication between skippers. Everyone apparently wants to cover as many miles as possible today...finally I see a Potter at an isolated dock ahead. We have passed Hood and are approaching Courtland. (Hood is near the point where the Peripheral Canal will tap the Sacramento to fill the swimming pools of Southern California.) I pull into one of the two slips--with some difficulty--centerboard hitting an underwater structure across the opening of the slip...tie up carefully; unpadded iron threatens to puncture hull...electric motor, driving a pump, I assume, is whining shrilly. Other boats join Terry and me at the strange dock, tying to the outside of the dock or to the other boats...wind blowing harder now...I break out a sandwich and a Coors; no one else eats...we discuss taking the Steamboat Slough branch. It's shorter and probably more scenic--no, we'll continue on the main river...conversation difficult over the noise of the pump and the flapping sails...we leave...difficult departure with wind blowing directly into the slip and Seagull has no reverse to back me out...back in the river, Manatee feels overpowered. I sail with main alone but she won't tack well, and I'm being left behind again. Drop the main and try to start Seagull before I drift onto the rocky levee--it won't start...hoist the main and sail down to the long dock at Courtland. According to Cruising the California Delta, describing "the historic old river town" of Courtland, "Behind those high levees are streets and buildings straight out of a rural, 1915 movie set." With the boat tied to the dock, I concentrate on the Seagull and it starts quickly. I shove off into the river. Sightseeing will wait until another, more leisurely cruise.

Bridges - Approaching the bascule bridge at Paintersville--the other boats are beyond the closed bridge--I hadn't seen the bridge open; they must have sailed under it...yes, the gage on the bridge shows enough mast clearance for a Potter...Manatee sails under the bridge, her skipper looking up at the mast, just in case...At Walnut Grove--another bascule bridge--not enough clearance...Don Bergst, ahead of me, yells back what I thought was "Shall we go on?" Stan has pulled up to a dock near the bridge. Two other boats were up ahead somewhere, past the bridge. I yell back a "Yes!" Don blows three long blasts on a freon horn and the bridge starts to open. I had misunderstood; he must have said "Shall I blow the horn?" I'm not ready--still some distance from the bridge and tacking inefficiently under mainsail only. The bridge and the highway traffic wait while I make about three tacks to get under the bridge, helped somewhat by the current. One or two other Potters behind me make it through too... At the third bridge, another bascule just above Isleton, Manatee is approaching the bridge under power, sails down, three other Potters strung out behind her. I slow her down and zig-zag, a mother hen gathering her chicks--freon horn ready...our line of four closes up smartly, and I press the button three times...What a magnificent sound! Manatee is no longer just a Potter; she's become the Delta Queen, paddle wheels churning up the river! The bridge tender was ready; instantly the highway

warning bell begins to ring and the arm comes down to stop the cars. Then the bridge itself--tons of steel--begins to rise. When it is open enough, the tender, with a musician's ear, answers me with three blasts from his horn, exactly duplicating the duration and spacing of my signal--and we pass proudly under the tipped up bridge.

Just below the Walnut Grove bridge, the river bends to the west, continuing in that direction for about 2½ miles. The wind is unobstructed and blowing maybe 25 knots right in my face. The boat pitches and pounds in the chop. I am doused with spray then almost instantly dried by the wind, only to be doused again. I circle back into the lee around the bend. Did Stan and Frank decide to stay at Walnut Grove? We are half way to Pittsburg and we still have Sunday to go the rest of the way. Don Bergst appears--no sign of the others. I'll press on. Terry Gotcher is far ahead somewhere. The wind shouldn't be so bad when the river turns south near Ryde and the levees can again provide some lee...Bill and Charlie were back up the river somewhere; they had continued sailing after the rest of us fired up our kickers and passed them by...Back in the 2½ mile wind tunnel again, I passed Don Bergst, bobbing about in the chop, refueling his outboard, looking relaxed and under control as always...I hugged the starboard bank, where there was slightly less chop, but not much less...endure...I checked the fuel in the Seagull, then managed to refuel underway, one handed, while steering with the other hand, polluting the river with spilled 10-to-1 mixture.

Around the bend at last, Terry Gotcher was ahead, sizzling along under sail. With full throttle, I could almost catch him, but he was on a reach now. Manatee can do 5 kn under power, but the John B. under sail was pulling away...Eventually, there are four of us motoring together, Don and De having joined Terry and me...Communication between boats is impossible over the noise of the motors. We need to find shelter for the night before we reach the broad river. The broad river starts just above Rio Vista, where Steamboat Slough, Cache Slough (from the Sacramento Deep Water Channel), and our own Sacramento converge. My charts showed a couple of islands below Isleton, and I hoped we could find shelter behind the first one. While many delta sloughs and rivers have numerous tule islands that can provide shelter from wind and wakes, the main Sacramento had offered us nothing but rocky levees, although there may have been shelter at some of the marinas we passed. I didn't know what the others had in mind, but I hoped they would stay with me until I reached the island.

After our procession under the Isleton bridge, we pass Isleton to port and, finally, a tree-lined opening appears in the starboard bank--the slough I had been watching for! I feel like Magellan as our flotilla enters the narrow creek, trees almost meeting above our masts...centerboard drags over a shoal...to port there are houses back behind the trees, to starboard there is a bank of impenetrable shrubbery. The navigable portion soon dead ends at a small bridge. I have to stop the motor and use a paddle to turn Manatee around in the narrow channel, then motor back toward the mouth. We put in on a muddy beach just inside the mouth. We have just secured the four boats when two more Potters appear in the river--Stan's Ooh No! towing Frank's Sweetheart II. Franks motor had conked out. Stan himself was under the weather with sinus miseries and was very glad to see our boats and our snug anchorage. We settled in for the night, wondering how Bill and Charlie were doing. Out in the river the wind continued to blow all

night, but nestled among the trees, "Potters Creek" was calm.

Sunday Morning - Manatee is last boat to leave Potters Creek. The sloop John B waits for me in the river; Stan, De, and Frank had gone ahead...7 a.m. and the wind was already 20 kn or more, and head on--another westward leg...what are conditions on the broad part of the river that lies ahead? and how bad will it be later in the day?...Sandy already knows she might have to bring the trailer to Rio Vista or Brannan Island instead of Pittsburg as I was not optimistic about the open stretch from Rio Vista on... sails down, motoring against wind and chop; try to get to Rio Vista at least...Passing to port is Ida Island, Vieira's Resort-- launch ramp and long dock on the riverfront are inviting--two openings in the bank lead back to sheltered slips of a marina... I keep going, but Manatee had noticed the ramp, too; Vieira's is not far astern when Manatee suddenly launches her jib up the forestay--sail, sheets, and halyard flopping and flapping angrily... Okay, old sea cow, I hear you; it's time to perform that classic maneuver known as the 180° turn...I yell to Terry as I put the helm over; he nods and keeps going...

At Vieira's, I phone Sandy to come get me, then return to the dock-- Potter's are approaching from downriver. In ones and twos, they arrive--Stan, Frank, Terry, Don--and tie up at Vieira's. They had gone as far as the broad river before turning back. Only De Marsh, under reefed main, has continued to slug his way toward Pittsburg. Then from upriver Bill Wight and Charlie Nearing arrive. Bill had reached one of the bridges (Walnut Grove or Isleton) at 11 p.m. the night before, vibrated the countryside with his freon horn, then learned that the bridge tender had departed at 10:30, so Bill could go no further. I didn't hear Charlie Nearing's story but he must have had a similar experience...We all have breakfast in Vieira's good restaurant.

On the drive back to Mountain View, we stop at Pittsburg, hoping to catch De's arrival. Sydney Marsh was waiting, and Stan Butler had stopped off too. De arrived within an hour. He apparently had no great difficulty, first sailing with reefed main and working jib, then with reefed main only. It was around 3 p.m. The trip from Sacramento to Pittsburg covered about 57 nautical miles (65 statute miles). From Sacramento to Ida Island (Vieira's) was about 37 nmi (42 statute miles).

-Harry Gordon

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