

Story of the Ida May

Time is a harsh and unforgiving master to wooden boats. It is the inexorable pull of the tide, a gravity of deterioration requiring constant vigilance and defense. The body weakens; the inner light fades as the stories of life that filled an aging yacht's decks at her prime are forgotten. Survive this force of nature

with grace, and transport the stories, and the hands of a man and an old yacht thrives with beauty we know as "classic."

The *Ida May* is a 46' one of a kind wooden sport fishing cruiser designed and built by Hugh Angelman in 1926.

Once the prized possession-and refuge-of the sad-eyed comedian Stan Laurel of Laurel and Hardy comedy fame, she was renowned for her speed and refinement. The *Ida May* was known to be the finest sport fisher of the golden era of yachting. Sadly the inner light was nearly extinguished when we discovered the *Ida May* in a peculiar San Francisco Bay Area covered berth. Her tran-

som deteriorating and the smell of dreaded mildew permeated her inner cabins. Her bright work dull and dilapidated resembled a snake that had just shed its skin. Varnish was peeling throughout. This would affect the intestinal fortitude of many but her energy beckoned and her history did not want to be forgotten. We bought her the next day.



Ida May in 1926

As our restoration progressed, she teased us with glimpses of a bygone Golden Era of Hollywood, big game fishing and California yachting. For the first three months without fail we worked every night until midnight. Following is a tale of unexpected success, failures, and test of survival in these desperate economic times.

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This is all heralded by the return, after 70 years, of her original ship's bell clock and the endearing friendship of Stan Laurel's only child, eighty-two year old, Lois Laurel-Hawes.

The first owner, Willard A. Van Brunt, former founder of John Deere Van Brunt and Company was an industrialist and philanthropist from Horicon, Wisconsin. Van Brunt owner of the largest farming implement company in the world helped revolutionized farming in America. He retired to California with a fortune in 1918 and spent the remainder of his long life fishing the waters around Catalina Island as a member and former President of the famed Tuna Club of Avalon. He commissioned the Ida May and celebrated her launch in the spring of 1926. Van Brunt spared no cost as the *Ida May* was built for \$120,000 in 1926 - a typical yacht of her size was built for \$14,000. Van Brunt hosted Herbert Hoover and Hoover's son on the Ida May in summer of 1927 for a fishing competition. Later, Van Brunt had a young writer, Ernest Hemingway aboard who valiantly fought a swordfish and helped establish a love affair with big game sportfishing.



In 1935 on a fishing trip on the *Ida May* 88-year old Van Brunt slipped aboard and fell, breaking his hip. He passed away within the week. Having never married, he left no immediate

heir. Stan Laurel, at the pinnacle of a prolific comedic career, was overtaken by the fever of big game fishing but had no yacht of his own. He quickly secured the *Ida May* from Van Brunt's estate and re-christened her Ruth-L after his beautiful wife, Virginia Ruth Laurel. Stan was ever in pursuit of a "button" fish to enable his entry into the Tuna Club. The diary of Stan's fa-



ther, Arthur Jefferson, documents his success on August 15, 1935:

At last Stan's luck is in!!!! - he caught a huge Marlin, weight 171 lbs.! Took him 45 minutes to land it. We went to pier, watched its weighing, etc. Great rejoicing! Stan now secures the coveted Tuna Club button, the ambition of all fishers.

Thus commenced years of joyous entertainment on the Ruth L. ex-*Ida*

May, a few Stan Laurel pratfalls (like reeling in a suitcase, getting hopelessly stuck in a kelp bed and colliding with a pod of whales), and valued respite from the maddening crowd of Hollywood. Lois, Laurel's only daughter vividly remembers sitting on the cabin top as a child, reclining against the windshield.

She reminisces of sitting in Oliver Hardy's lap as he sang "Harvest Moon." As close to her as a second father, "Babe"preferred golfing to fishing and yachting. Stan joked that it was just as well, for "we can't see the boat when Ollie get's on!"

After his divorce to Ruth in late 1938 (they married and divorced three times over the course of their tempestuous relationship), Stan sold the yacht and all its gear to Jonah Jones, Jr. Jonah was an oil tycoon who wrote many of the oil and gas laws in California and was Howard Hughes' attorney for over thirty years. The only item Stan moved was the ship's clock. He never owned another boat. Years later, he sat at his typewriter daily, generously answering each of the many fan letters he received. Next to his typewriter was his Lifetime Achievement Academy Award and the clock, its comforting chimes reminding him of his days on the ocean playground and the yacht he cherished.

The *Ida May* shines a little brighter today but she still awaits her engines to



repower her back to her glory days of cruising to Avalon and hitting 30+ knots racing to catch colossal marlin and blue fin tuna. Sadly, she will never reach speeds like this again. But her 83-year-old frames are holding tight and her triple planking has kept her alive all these years. The restoration has been both exhilarating and exhausting; there is nothing more special than restoring a part of maritime history. The *Ida May* yearns for more attention and hopes to attract another owner to help her survive for

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Stripping paint past midnight

another eighty years. We are currently looking for a special individual that would like to be involved in completing the last phase of this project. You can learn more about the *Ida May* and our



Ida May today



The Oxbow Incident

by Bill Wells

CYA member Kim Korth, coordinator of the 2009 Delta Loop Festival, and the management of Oxbow Marina (Kim is part owner) provided complementary docking and a continental breakfast for all participants for the weekend.

Gerry Merritt & Jerry Willar brought their beautiful 1957 Mathews *True Grit* over to the guest docks early in the week and the weather was sunny and warm but the weatherman kept giving ominous reports of a storm front moving in. I brought *Ranger* over on Thursday evening and it was beautiful with few clouds and not a breath of wind.



Colleen and Hiltot II

At mid morning on Friday Colleen (Welch), Hiltot II (Engfer), and Eslo (Clothier) cruised up from the Bay after an overnight rendezvous in Antioch. Siren (Bowerman / Hayes), Sea Witch (Hazelett), Catherine E (Homenko), Blue Moon (Williams) and Bella Vita (Durante) pulled in on Friday too along with some potential member boats. Martin & Janice McNair brought Allure over on Saturday morning and later Jack Hanna and Sue Reilly came in aboard their Tollycraft. I may have missed a couple of boats here as all weekend boats were arriving and departing, if I left you out it

was not intentional!

Unfortunately the sky turned to rain late Friday afternoon and by evening it was coming down hard and steady. We had planned to have a barbecue dinner at the picnic area by the docks but the rain forced us to don our foul weather gear and move under the eaves of the office building, but as soon as we did that the wind picked up and started blowing the rain under our shelter. It reminded me of my Navy days on Whidby Island when we would be standing under the wing of an F4 Phantom working while the rain blew on us. We still had a great dinner and since it was Patrick Welch's birthday we had cake and he blew out the candles with the help of the wind. After dinner

> we all headed for shelter and George and Candice served some great red wine aboard Catherine E. The lower cabin aboard Ranger was leaking like a sieve from the rain so after putting out every pot and pan aboard to catch water I had a good night's sleep in the wheel house.

It was raining intermittently on Saturday, the day of the Loop Fest, but we were able to use the clubhouse to have our bridge meeting. Commodore Steve, Alan Almquist, and Les Cochren arrived by land yacht to attend the meeting. Visitors stopped by to admire our boats during the day. We estimated about 200 people walked the docks and talked to the skippers and crews. Randy Garrett, a local photographer, took many photos and several of them were published in the local Rio Vista newspaper bringing further fame to the intrepid classic yachters.

Classic History

115 YEARS OF MARINE ENGINE DEVELOPMENT

A recent article in Classic Boating magazine was interesting as it regarded Sir Charles Parsons' invention and demonstration of TURBINIA, the first steam turbine powered vessel. TURBINIA was built as a fine-lined displacement hull, laid down in 1894. Sir Charles had it fitted with a series of experimental engines and propellers over the next three years until a successful combination was achieved. In 1897 he astonished the world by a surprise appearance of TURBINIA during the Royal Naval Review at Spithead. The yacht-like TURBINIA repeatedly dashed smoothly through the fleet at the unheard of speed of 34 knots. Impressed by this feat the British Admiralty began purchasing Parson turbines for its new torpedo boat destroyers in 1898 and the new power plant, hailed as the greatest advance in steam power since the time of James Watt, rapidly gained acceptance.

The Classic Boating article went on to say that in a few years steam turbines were being installed in large ships including the famous liners *LUSITANIA* and *TITANIC*. This statement raised a question in Alan Almquist's mind which he wanted me to comment on. If *TITANIC* had steam turbine propulsion, did that mean that the scenes in the movie "Titanic", featuring the triple expansion reciprocating engine of our beloved Liberty Ship *SS JEREMIAH O'BRIEN*, were bogus?

The answer is not what might at first glance be expected.

I answered Alan's question by saying that the *TITANIC* propulsion plant used BOTH reciprocating steam engines AND a steam turbine. The engines drove the outboard propeller shafts and the turbine drove a centerline propeller shaft. Live steam from the boilers was delivered directly to the pair of reciprocating engines. Exhaust steam from the

engines went to the turbine where it expanded further to a vacuum maintained in the main condenser.

Using a turbine allowed more power and efficiency to be obtained than would be possible within the limitations of piston speed and dimensions of the reciprocating engines' immense low pressure cylinders.

This arrangement only worked at high power levels, however, because at reduced power and while maneuvering, there wasn't enough energy in the engines' exhaust to spin the turbine, so all thrust generation was dependent upon the reciprocating engines alone.

The *TITANIC* engines were much larger than the *JEREMIAH*'s, but still not big enough to generate the required power without sacrificing fuel economy, hence the exhaust turbine concept. This hybrid design enjoyed a brief period of popularity when turbines were considered "new fangled". It was soon abandoned as the economy and reliability of steam turbines became established at sea.

In 1892 Herr Rudolf Diesel of Germany patented a radically different type of engine in which air was compressed and fuel ignited with the cylinder. Internal combustion promised half the fuel consumption of contemporary steam plants, no standby losses, and quick starting, but was limited to smaller horsepower ratings pending evolutionary developments in design and metallurgy. Persistent development would eventually lead to its domination of the seas..

The British-German battleship construction competition leading up to WW I completed the switch from coal and reciprocating steam engines to oil fuel and turbines. Designs were developed for both turbine/reduction gear drives and turbo/electric combinations.

The last U.S. Navy battleship built with reciprocating steam engines was the dreadnaught *USS TEXAS*. It was constructed for WW I and served in WW II. It is now a museum ship berthed in Houston and

played a Japanese battleship in the movie "Tora! Tora! Tora!".

The great ocean liners of the 1930's, like RMS *QUEEN MARY*, capitalized on WW I steam turbine developments, achieving substantial increases in ship size, power, and speed.

During this period the old reliable reciprocating marine steam engine became gradually limited to older and smaller vessels, such as harbor tugs and riverboats, where it encountered increasingly stiff competition from the diesel. It was briefly revived for the WWII Liberty ship emergency construction program for two reasons. (1.) It was simple to build and operate and (2.) when war broke out our industrial complex had to dedicate all of its steam turbine manufacturing capacity in support of combat warship construction. As mobilization got underway, steam turbines eventually became available for new cargo ships, most notably the Victory Ship and T-2 tanker construction programs.

By 1960 reciprocating steam at sea was well on its way to obscurity, driven to extinction by the superiority of steam turbines and diesel engines.

For all practical purposes the marine steam turbine plant reached its zenith in the mid-1970's. Steam at sea simply could not compete with the relentless improvements in efficiency and economy of European designed marine diesel engines. By the 1980's diesel power plants even acquired the ability to operate on inexpensive residual fuel oil previously only suitable for firing boilers.

Today's worldwide merchant fleet is comprised of about 99% diesel, about 1% steam turbine, and a small number of gas turbine powered ships. The future of marine steam propulsion appears to primarily lie in military applications: nuclear powered submarines, aircraft carriers, and surface combatants all employ steam turbines.

Jim Sweeney

Petaluma Cruise-In Festival of Fun, September 11-13

Once again, the Northern California Fleet of the Classic Yacht Association will be voyaging to the city of Petaluma and once again the fleet will be helping the City celebrate its maritime heritage during its second annual Riverfest during the weekend of September 11-13. It promises to be an exciting weekend in the Turning Basin and more details on Saturday's Riverfest will be announced in an upcoming event flyer.

Yachters are encouraged to cruise-in early on Thursday or Friday to enjoy some "quiet" time before the Saturday festivities. Friday evening we will have our traditional CYA potluck dinner, so polish up those favorite dockside recipes! Attendees are encouraged to open up their yachts for public viewing from approximately 11am-3pm on Saturday. Later Saturday evening, attendees will be free to try out any number of downtown Petaluma's fine restaurants: all within easy walking distance of the docks. A listing of local restaurants and downtown businesses will be mailed out to participating yachts.

There will be a \$15 skippers fee to help cover event costs. Please contact Greg Sabourin, event organizer, at (707) 293-3685 or by email, gjsabourin@aol.com as to your intention to attend this event, as soon as possible. Look for an event flyer in the mail come late July.

Continuing our trip....

The Petaluma rendezvous and the Sacramento Memorial event are not to be missed. In order to encourage participation I suggested a week long cruise

from Petaluma through the delta arriving in Sacramento the following weekend. The cruise is an impromptu "unofficial" event which has a great start in Petaluma and a great finish in Old Town, Sacramento, but the details in the middle are still fuzzy and are being debated as I write.

It may well be that our fleet consisting now of about half dozen of our members will decide once we get started our itinerary on a day by day basis. However, in order to keep some focus on our goal of reaching Sacramento by the next week our route should progress roughly towards that destination. Certainly feeding ourselves along the way will dictate some of our stops and will probably eliminate the possibilities of "anchoring out" among the tules. I threw the last

of my fishing poles away recently living off the "fat of the land" is no longer an option. The discussion so far has included Benicia, Grindstone Joe's, Windmill Cove, Walnut Grove and Rio Vista (probably on the homeward leg) No one, interestingly enough has suggested Lost Isle, but the wet tee shirt contests are probably summer by then over for the anyway. I suggest that anyone who might be interested in the cruise, weigh in with me with your thoughts. What does, Bill

Wells, our Delta guru think? Contact Alan 916-505-3680

Sacramento Forget Me Knot September 19

As the summer ends, fall begins and the Classic Yachts of the "Forget Me Knot" come back to blend again. On Saturday, September 19, 2009 at 1:00 p.m. the 4th annual "Forget Me Knot" celebration to honor our veterans will be held on the Sacramento River. Classic Yachts from the Classic Yacht Association, The California Honor Guard, Veter-

ans and members of our community will commemorate all who served and made the ultimate sacrifice for our country by laying wreaths on the Sacramento River. A regatta of half a dozen or more Classic Yachts will embark from Petaluma, California and arrive Friday, September 18, 2009, at the Sacramento Marina.

This year's event will have three memorial wreaths. The first wreath will be laid to honor all veterans. A second Forget Knot Wreath will be laid to honor Chong Cheng Yang, and members of the Hmong community that, while not veterans, were recruited as allies by the U.S. Government to fight in the Viet Nam War. The final "Forget Me Knot" Wreath will be laid to honor the loved ones that have passed on. Special honors will be presented to the daughters of two World War II Veterans. The first is Leslie Tyler, the



Photo from 2008 event

daughter of First Lieutenant Everett R Schieven who was a P.O.W in Germany from 1943-44. and flew a B-24 Liberator Air Craft. The second is Renee Morgan, daughter of a World War II Silver Star recipient, Fire Control man Second Class, Louis Hudson. Anyone wishing to have special intentions can register the names of their deceased loved ones at www.mycya.net

On Friday, there will be Pot Luck and on Saturday, September 19, from 2 - 4 p.m., a WWII memorabilia viewing and classic car display will be held.



Commodore's Corner By Steve Kadzielawa

The season for enjoying classic yachting finally arrived in April with a blitz of events to awaken us from the idle times of winter. The last two weeks of April and the first week of May were filled with activities from the delta to the bay and back. The season began with a loyal group of delta opener participants parading around Bethel Island in the traditional fashion. The following week, for the west coast swing, we had another successful Opening Day on the Bay. The first week of May was back in the delta for our first official participation in the annual Delta Loop Festival. Three weeks, three events, and nearly 30 different member and guest boats in attendance. Who could ask for a better start?

The days leading up to Opening Day on the Bay were defined by cool and blustery weather with just enough variation for me to keep my eyes on the weather forecast three times a day. The predictions for Sunday did not look promising but when the day arrived the weather cooperated and was actually darn near perfect. The winds along the parade route and crossing the slot were uncharacteristically calm as were the seas. It was the smoothest ride north to Pt. Richmond in recent memory.

Seven boats contributed to the effort for this exceptional event. The PICYA does a fantastic job organizing the parade of over 100 yachts evidenced by the hundreds of spectators on shore to admire and cheer the beautifully decorated vessels. During my many interactions with the PICYA organizers, it was repeatedly emphasized to me the important roll the Classic Yacht Association plays in the overall success of the day. Thanks to our consistent effort and dedication each year, we own the leading position in the parade.

I, for one, am particularly proud of our showing in the past years and am extremely thankful to our members that spare the time and make the effort to uphold the reputation of the CYA. I will admit, in the last few years that I have been involved with organizing our involvement; I hold my breath while awaiting the RSVPs. And once again I wasn't let down. My many thanks go to Mel and Gig of *Pat Pending*, Tom and Nancy of *Eslo*, Otto and Patricia of *Beauty*, Bill and

Grace Stephanie, and Patrick and Paul of Colleen for their steadfast devotion. Unfortunately Alex's schedule precluded him from participating with *Huapala* at the last minute but, thanks to Peter Jeal and Susie Parker aboard Bucca-

neer, the gap was filled. All of these yachts have a colorful history and it is a true gift to see them all aligned in parade formation. For some great individual photos of the classics, go to the PICYA website (www.picya.org) and click on the

link for opening day photos on the home page. The professional photographer's web address and information is included if you are interested in obtaining a copy, perhaps for a future calendar.

At the conclusion of the parade the fleet motored north to Sugar Dock where Bill and Grace once again provided a wonderful venue for our annual opening day pot luck party. The variety of salads, snacks, entrees, BBQ and desserts were refreshing and delicious but as usual the main attraction was the experience of boarding and inspecting the Bodle's 103' schooner Eros. To view the progress each year is an absolute thrill and stepping aboard this year was a jaw dropping experience as she appears to be nearly ready to set sail for blue water. I only hope she spends a good part of her new life time sailing the bay. Overall it was a most enjoyable afternoon shared with great people aboard great boats.



Various classic boats, mostly from 1940's, following Defiance (an 85' Stephens) in the classics portion of the Opening Day on the Bay parade up San Francisco cityfront, Sunday, April 26, 2009. Linda USCG Auxiliary vessle "Silver Charm"

PICYA STUFF

by Dick and Mavis Engfer

April 26 Sunday Opening Day on San Francisco Bay has happened. Photos or CD slide show available - www.picya.org for details.

Yaching Yearbook 2009 exists! Copies still available yyb@frontiernet.net.

PICYA LOG is published every two months. Available on line www.picya.org. Articles or dates of club activities are requested - two month lead time - send to editor, Johnnie Owen jowen@teal.net. Johnnie is begging for items! Photos welcome!

RBOC and PICYA's big push remains to support the Department of Boating and Waterways remaining independent - NOT being absorbed into Dept. of Parks & Recreation. Please respond when "Call to Arms" are issued www.rboc.org.

Wheel Chair Regatta 2009 is Saturday, September 26, based at Encinal YC. Any and all help of boats, people or \$\$\$(tax deductible) are welcome.

Scholarship \$2500 program continues. The deadline for 2009 is June 30. The Western Boating Safety Group provides three, PICYA provides one. Relatives of PICYA member club persons are eligible. Questions - www.picya.org or Linda Breninger lbreninger@jps.net 916-771-5685.

MAYDAY Hoax calls are becoming

more prevalent. If you should place a MayDay call, but the emergency no longer exists, please cancel your call. Watch for children playing with the radio.

"Top Women in American Boating" article in BoatU.S. Magazine May 2009 issue pages 36 & 37 includes "Our" Lenora Clark as one of the eleven women. Lenora lives in Discovery Bay and is active in PICYA and since 2005 has been on the California Boating and Waterways Commission.

Recreational boating is fortunate to have such a gifted person representing our interests.

Safety Notice reminder to check Local Notice to Mariners - June 9 - First Weekly Edition, page 9 - "Safety Zone - San Pablo Bay - June 8 thru 12 avoid an area of "Judgmental Flights" - specifics on webste (link on www.picya.org) phone



Susie Engfer at 101 with gr. granddaughterSadia

Tahoe Event - 2009

Our 2009 Tahoe event is on for another year, the following is an outline of activities:

July 17th (Friday nite), the BBQ, this years at a different location. The Hellman-Ehrman Mansion at Sugar Pine Point State Park located approximately half way between Tahoe City and South Tahoe will be this years lawn party.

The BBQ will run from 1700 to 2000 and will take place on the Mansion grounds in front of the park rangers home at the waters edge. Once again associate member Alex KanwetzII will be our chef with the usual fare and drinks we have each year. We arranged by (Alex II and the park ranger) to have access to the boat house and also to view the classic boats stored there which includes the famous "Cherokee". Also arranged with the park ranger a tour of the complete grounds.

I must say that of all the venues at Lake Tahoe I believe this is the most fantastic and beautiful. This Mansion has a great history going back to 1897. This spot (on the west shore of course), will be a real treat for our association.

The following day at 0730 *Huapala* will pull out of Home-wood (Obexers marina) and head for the Tahoe Keys for the ACBS boat show starting at 0900. we will be showing her all day until approx 1600 and then head back to home port at Homewood. The first 10 that sign up will be able to travel to the boat show if they wish or have some or all just drive to South Shore for the event..

I believe the ACBS is still charging \$5.00 per person for the Boat show, and the State park I believe also is charging \$5.00 per person with the BBQ/drinks at \$15.00 per person..

Due to some other family constraints I will not be able to provide any housing this year.

USCG 415-399-7442.

In checking with the motor lodge situation some of the more affordable spots is the Grub Stake Lodge at Home-wood, (530-525-6728) from \$48 to \$63 per nite plus tax, Rodeway Inn at Stateline 866-925-8680 \$32 +tax on up, Super 8 Lake Tahoe South Lake Tahoe from \$34+ on up, Pepper Tree Inn Tahoe City 866-630-3395, \$79.00+up, Budget Inn South Lake Tahoe \$55+ on up 866-925-1473, Lake Tahoe Days Inn South Lake Tahoe \$39+ on up (866-925-4157) If you need additional information you can pull up the Sugar Pine Projoti Strate Birk to athereb planter contact me on my cell as I am between Tahoe and Reno quite a bit. (775-846-0560) if you are coming I will need checks made out to me (for my Mexico trip...joke) and send to P.O. Box 6357 Tahoe City, Ca 96145.

Well that is about it, I think the venue is different this year with a very special treat by the park ranger at SPP facility.

Alex Kanwetz.

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Coming Events

South Beach Harbor San Francisco June 26-28, 2009 Steve Kadzielawa and Greg Sabourin, Chairs

Tahoe Event July 17-19, 2009 Alex Kanwetz, Chair Petaluma Event September 11, 12 and 13, 2009 Greg Sabourin, Chair

> Continue from Petaluma to Sacramento September 14-19, 2009 Alan Almquist, Chair ajalmquis@yahoo.com

Forget Me Knot (unofficial) September 19, 2009 Les Cochren, Chair

Events may be subject to change. Please contact coordinators and/or see further information coming in the mail or in future newsletters. If you are interested in participating in the planning of any of these events, please contact Steve Kadzielawa, Commodore.

CLASSIC CURRENTS

Steve Kadzielawa, COMMODORE

PLEASE SEND ARTICLES, PHOTOS OR "For Sale" to: Alan Almquist ajalmquis@yahoo.com

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