



# SYSOCO

## News

AUGUST 2005

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## Six Pac Adventure to Astoria The Race that is a Cruise

DALE MACK, CELTIC MYST

*This story contains excerpts from a much longer story about the 2005 SixPac by Dale Mack in the Columbia River Catalina Association newsletter, which can be found at <http://craca.netfirms.com/news/200508/200508.htm>. Dale sailed his Catalina 30 Celtic Myst in the SixPac Cruising Class.*

I encountered the Six Pac two years ago when Celtic Myst was on its first downriver cruise. Sponsored by the Oregon Corinthian Sailing Association (OCSA) and held on odd numbered years, the Six Pac represents six days of racing for the serious folks and three days for the cruisers. I wasn't looking for a race, but sailing in the company of others is always appealing.

I invited my friend Jim, a former colleague from our days in Boise, to sail with me and share the adventure. Jim's had a varied career from being a commercial guide on the Colorado River, to being a National Park Service Ranger, but he's never done much sailing.

In true Cruising Class style preparing for the event focused on making sure that important items like the BBQ were onboard instead of more traditional racing pursuits like getting rid of excess weight. After all I was on vacation, and bring reading material was more important than whether I reached the destination before someone else.

### Sat., 7/23 (Portland to Sand Island, St. Helens)

There were three starts. Six "go fast" serious racers were in the first, three Cal



20's were in the second, and seventeen Cruising Class boats were in the third.

The third start was off by 11:15 am, and our conservative strategy worked and we were nearly the last boat to cross;-) It was a sunny day and the wind was blowing 12-14 knots apparent and building.

The wind continued to build and before long we were sailing in winds steady at 22-23 knots apparent, with gusts 25-26 knots. From the starting line to the finish, we performed fifty-two (52) tacks and crossed the line at 3:15 pm. While the course was officially 16.5 nautical miles (nm), our GPS showed that the distance actually sailed was 21.6 nm.

### Sun., 7/24 (Sand Island to Cathlamet)

The next leg of the race had us starting at buoy "75", downriver from Sand Island, and finishing at daymark "1" near Stella, Washington. With the racing scheduled to start at 10 am, most participants departed Sand Island between 9:00-9:15 am. Aboard Celtic Myst, we were still in make and consume coffee mode so we didn't get underway until 9:40 am. We reached the starting area at 10 am which guaranteed we'd not be ready for our 10:15 am start. We were the last boat to start, in fact the race

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## Thoughts From the Rear

**BILL SANBORN**

Now that the One-Design/Level Regatta is in the books, the next SYSCO event will be the St Helens Race/Cruise, followed by the Fall Awards Banquet, and then the ever popular Fall Potato Planting (aka...Al Bundy Cruise, ABC, All Boys Cruise, Always Bright and Cloudless skies). Several other Clubs' fall events are on the schedule for those wanting to race and Fall is a great time to just take the boat out for a sail. We'll also have a few "pick-up" over night cruises.

Delta Cruise was for us a great and very relaxing trip with some good sailing. We started early Friday afternoon and got to Martin Island before dark and settled in and waited for the rest of the Cruisers to show on Saturday. We spent the day sailing the dinghy in the pond and did some swimming. As the fleet of nine boats assembled, we had a chance to retell all the old stories and added a few new ones. We got underway down river Sunday morning with

nice winds and sailed just past Stella until the winds gave out. We prepared to meet the flooding tide and the winds coming around the Cape Horn and into Cathlamet. The heat had taken its toll on our ice and our unfrozen meat needed to be cooked, so we showered and fixed dinner aboard while the rest of the crews went out for dinner.

Early Monday morning the Six-Pac boats began their run on to Astoria on the falling tide, while we spent the day icing cooler and seeking shade, waiting for the tide to fill for our trip through the islands. A couple of the fellows did run a dinghy back to Gull Island and confirmed the route into that anchorage. We are now six boats as we leave Cathlamet mid afternoon to catch the high tide at the Horseshoe Island light. We followed our proven route and were happy to see that the Cormorants were on their stations marking all the dead heads as we approached. We arrived at Warren Slough early evening and rafted all the boats. Tuesday, another boat found us and joined the raft up. We spent the next three days

there resting, kayaking, swimming, napping, reading, and following the shade under boom tents. We also established and dedicated an official ABC Out-Station. We put a chain around the piling with the flower on top that I have written about and visited over the last 21 years. This chain can be used for the stern tie by anyone visiting our Out-Station. We tied a fender with a note on it for all to find.

By Thursday morning the tides were right, ice was gone, and it was lots of miles up River, so we waved good bye to the flowers and made a repeat visit to Cathlamet, for ice, fresh vegetables and showers. Four of the boats only stopped a short while and went on to Gull Island for the night. We spent the night in Cathlamet with dinner out and breakfast out in the morning before starting our sail to Martin Island for Friday evening and Saturday. We rested, swam and in the early Saturday evening pulled out and took advantage of the evening breeze to sail back to our dock and were home at 10 p.m.

*See you down River.*



*The Raft up in Warren Slough on the Delta Cruise.*

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committee had already pulled up their anchor and headed off to Stella before we reached buoy "75".

In winds of 12-14 knots apparent and building, we started the race with a reefed main. The morning was gorgeous with sunny skies, flat water, and the promise of a great day of sailing. Near the decommissioned Trojan Nuclear power plant we shook out the reef as the wind had dropped to 8-10 apparent.

We reached the Longview bridge at 1:22 pm. The wind was once again building and we soon found ourselves sailing in 17-19 knots apparent with gusts to 21 knots. Our increasingly coordinated tacks continued to play off as we passed a Newport 33, a Cal 34, and were closing on a Beneteau 42 when we crossed the finish line a daymark "1" near Stella, Washington. From the starting line to the finish, we performed sixty (60) tacks and crossed the line at 2:45 pm. While the course was officially 22 nautical miles (nm), our GPS showed the distance actually sailed was 30 nm.

**Wed., 7/27 (Astoria Cup Regatta):**

I crewed on Gary Bruner's C25, Encore!, along with Gary's friend John, and Leanne, a crewmember from the Six Pac Race Committee boat who was interested in some racing experience. The Astoria Cup Regatta, sponsored by Schooner Creek Boat Works, was optional for the Six Pac Cruising Class, and we went into it with no illusions about how we'd do against the likes of a race-prepared Mumm 30, other very competitive Six Pac racers or the local boats from Astoria. The purpose was to go out and have some fun.

The race committee was anchored west of the bridge and



*SixPac boats battle it out under the Astoria Bridge.*

using buoy "33" as one end of the start/finish line. The course was two laps, with the first leg windward to a downstream buoy, and then a long downwind leg upriver to a buoy on the east side of the bridge.

***Did I mention that the seas were lumpy?***

Running an average of six feet with occasional crest to trough distances of 10+ feet we had a wild ride. The wind was blowing steady at 20-25 knots with gusts in the 25-30 knot range. Encore! spent most of its time heeled over 30-35° going to windward, as Gary fought to maintain power in the sails so we could punch through the swells.

This was the most physically punishing race I had ever been in. For three hours we chased the faster boats. I served as the bowman which meant I helped get sails up and down, helped the 135 Genoa through the tacks and managed the bow tasks during the downwind legs. Windward, Leanne and I would sit on the rail and shortly into the race we were

completely soaked. On more than one occasion we watched the boat climb to the top of a crest as the water disappeared from the front half of the boat and for a moment we found ourselves suspended in air until the bow dipped toward the trough. Since Leanne and I endured most the impact of the water coming over the bow, we eventually got to a point where we'd see them coming and she'd turn and look at me with a smile on her face, I'd smile back, we'd dip our heads and wait for the wave.

Gary offered to drop out of the race on the last downwind leg, but the crew voted to keep going. While we were wet, tired, and had already had a couple of exciting moments, the truth of the situation was that we were in control, the boat was doing well, the end was near, and Gary was doing a pretty fair job at the tiller in some tough conditions. We rounded the downwind mark, and about 100 yards after passing the under the bridge the snap

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shackle attaching the sheets to the Genoa blew open during a tack, leaving us no control of the sail. Climbing onto the pitching bow with the boat heeling from 30-40° was an interesting challenge for me with footing left to the toe rail, standing on stanchions and lifelines, and bracing myself in the bow pulpit. After a failed attempt to reattach the sheets with a quick luff of the Genoa that would bring the clew over the deck (in all the noise we never got the maneuver communicated and coordinated corrected) we opted to drop the sail, reattach the sheets, and hoist it up again.

We finished that race dead last, but not defeated. It had been hard, it had been uncomfortable at times, it had also made you question why you were out there, but it never made you want to quit. The truth is you've got to trust your equipment, your skills, and the people you sail with, and on that day I had all three. While it was intense at times, it was also fun judging by the smiles we shared with each other.

**Fri., 7/29 (Astoria to Cathlamet):**

Our last day of racing would have us starting just outside the marina, heading windward to a downstream buoy and then sailing downwind all the way to Cathlamet. At 11:15 am the signal came down for the start of the Cruising Class. The windward buoy was fetched with ease and we settled into the long downwind journey to Cathlamet. With Jim handling the helm once again, I moved to the bow to get the whisker pole in place as we went into a wing-n-wing configuration. The boats flying spinnakers really jumped ahead.

Once under the bridge, the boats began to spread out and the faster boats just kept increasing their separation. The wind was building from the 14 knots we had enjoyed at the start. By the time Tongue Point was far behind, the wind was blowing steady at 20 knots true, with the occasional gust to 26 knots. The following sea turned out to be more of a challenge than the wind. The swells required all the helmsman's attention as they overtook the boat. We were sailing fast despite the ebb tide and the current, but it was a lot of work for the person driving the boat. We had sailed 27.3 nautical miles by the time we crossed the finish line at Cathlamet. The last thirty minutes of the sailing had been in diminishing wind so we were happy to be done.

### ***Reflections on the 2005 Six Pac***

I guess the first question is whether I'm going to do the 2007 Six Pac. Right now the answer would be no. The Six Pac

reinforced for me that I'm a cruiser at heart. While I enjoy racing, I like it in small doses. I'm sure that being the only crew on the boat while my friend with the bad back steered probably has tainted my view of the experience. Heck, it was hard work and long days (the very reason why I only compete in a couple of weekend regattas a year).

On the more positive side it was nice sailing stretches of the river I had only motored over before. I liked sharing the adventure in a group and the people I met over the course of the week were a joy to chat with. Astoria remains a wonderful place to visit and walkabout, not to mention the excellent restaurants.

Since the Cruising Cruise sits in Astoria for three days, perhaps next time a trip to Illwaco, WA or even across the bar and up to Gray's Harbor might be something to consider. Gasp! didn't I really say "...next time". Who knows?

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## **The Afterguard**

**BOB WALDRON**

With the publication of this newsletter SYSCO will have wrapped up many events, Summer Series, One Design and the unofficial Delta Cruise. There is much to do on the sailing Calendar with September nearby, the St. Helens Race/Cruise and the Awards Banquet.

With that said lets move on. Each year readers have seen my articles about this point in the season plead for participation in the administration, planning, and development of club activities as fall and winter approach. That is when most of the work for the subsequent season takes place. OCSA will be putting together the race calendar for next season, as well as (maybe) Sail Education,

and Race Management seminars. All this takes people power, and if you like showing up at the start line each season, it might be time you help make sure everyone else also gets to show up at the start line. This stuff just does not happen: it takes considerable participation.

I know the editor would like to get some fresh blood in the newsletter and perhaps that is a signal to make sure we keep getting fresh participation in our sailing organizations. Think about it, you have a little time to insure you get to have input into next season.

So, let's set up a test, I will take the first step in pushing others to the front by making this the last Afterguard.

***See you on the River.***