

# Starting Line



September 2012

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# SYSCO

Small Yacht Sailing Club of Oregon

[www.syscosailing.org](http://www.syscosailing.org)

# From the Commodore

By Michael Nance, Commodore



It must be the end of summer as Pancho is now out of the water. Seems like summer was just getting going, but alas, the SYSCO racing season is over. A big thank you to ALL of the SYSCO volunteers

who have made 2012 a very successful year for the club. A lot of changes were made and, in my humble opinion, for the most part were all well received and executed. In addition, Pancho got a major overhaul and SYSCO is now sporting a brand new state-of-the-art course board! Get ready for more changes in 2013 as the new Racing Rules of Sailing take effect on January 1, 2013. OCSA and all of the four area clubs will be coordinating with each other to present seminars and presentations regarding the new rules.

Be on the lookout for a couple of SurveyMonkeys coming your way concerning the 2013 OCSA Sailing Instructions and local area considerations.

The Saint Helen's Race/Cruise was a light air event, but otherwise well attended and we pretty much filled up the public docks there. Mike Daly of Air Fair got line honors at the start, but that was pretty much it for the race. I personally learned that even a brand new (when I bought the boat in 2008) Racor fuel filter should be changed at least every five years or so. Thank you Wave Dancer for having a spare! And then on the way back to Portland on Sunday, we ended up towing Amaretto for about a half an







hour while they fixed an electrical problem. Not much sailing, but boating adventures and excitement none the less.

If you won a trophy in any SYSCO series or weekend regatta, please make sure you attend the SYSCO Awards Party on Oct. 20 at PYC. The club had great difficulty in getting last year's trophies delivered to all of the winners that did not attend the event. Advance registration for the Awards Party is recommended and is available online at [syscosailing.org](http://syscosailing.org) on the home page.

Fair Winds  
Michael Nance, Commodore

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# How Not to Rename Your Boat

By Tod Bassham

*“He was hanged like a dog, and sun-dried like the rest, at Corso Castle. That was Roberts’ men, that was, and comed of changing names to their ships – Royal Fortune, and so on. Now what a ship was christened, so let her stay, I say.”*

Robert Louis Stevenson, *Treasure Island* (1881).

Because sailors deal intimately with capricious, elemental forces far beyond our control—storms, tides, marine plumbing—we are a superstitious lot. Even the most skeptical sailors go to extreme lengths to avoid departing port on a Friday, and many are even uncomfortable racing in a Friday night beercan. More than one rational humanist has been observed before a Friday night race surreptitiously spilling a little beer into the scuppers, in a semi-unconscious urge to ward off the evil eye. Or maybe rational humanists just can’t hold their beer: it’s hard to tell sometimes.

Whatever the case, mariners are often more sensitive than most to the thin veil that separates the material world from the numinous. Deep down, all sailors are animists, dimly aware that some “inanimate” objects, most especially the boats that bear us over the watery abyss, are not just clumps of atoms, but living beings with souls. Because we are but poor, simple men, we tend to *feminamorphize* the souls of our boats, a cool word I just made up that means, as used here: “the act of investing beloved curvaceous objects with the numinous characteristics of beloved curvaceous persons of the female persuasion.” In other words,



*Medea prepares a potion for her philandering husband Jason. John William Waterhouse, 1907.*

a boat is always a she, and the soul of a boat must therefore also be a *she*, if you follow my reasoning.

That being so, it is of the utmost importance that a sailor call his beloved curvaceous object by her true *name*. If your boat’s true name is *Medea*, for example, it is considered bad form to blurt out any other name while in the throes of a difficult gybe.

In addition to offending the soul of the beloved curvaceous object that is keeping you from drowning in the briny deep, such malapropisms can confuse and offend other elemental beings on whose good-will sailors depend. The ancient Greeks, of course, knew these elemental beings as the gods, and were careful to keep on their good side. Particularly relevant here is *Poseidon*, the sea god, who protects those ships that he has granted leave to wander his watery realm. Poseidon



was notoriously less forgiving, however, to trespassers. For these reasons, ancient sailors were careful to (1) discover the true *name* of their ship, and (2) make sure that name is written in Poseidon's little black book.

From these antecedents comes the most profound of all nautical superstitions: *it is bad ju-ju to rename your boat*, at least without observing every jot and tittle of the proper de-naming and re-naming ritual. My wife and I recently discovered this, to our sorrow, when we renamed our boat. The result was a boat that suffered from an identity crisis and, worse, a seriously pissed off sea god.

As related elsewhere, my wife Deedie—the other beloved curvaceous object in my life—had insisted that we acquire a Merit 25. Subsequently we became caretakers of *Moonbeam*. Under that name she had taken honors in Midget Offshore Racing Club regattas back in the 1980s. But she had spent most of the last decade sitting neglected on a trailer, and the faded name painted in yellow on her quarters was only a bitter reminder of better days. On our first maiden sail, Deedie took the tiller, and communed silently with her new boat, using feminine wavelengths imperceptible to the clueless male of the species. Finally, she announced that her new boat wanted a complete makeover. “Does she want a suite of new 3DL racing sails?” I asked hopefully. Deedie gave me a long look. “Nooooo,” she said slowly, as if speaking to a particularly dim six-year old, “she is

more interested in finding a new name, to celebrate being reborn into a new life.”

Thus it was that we went looking for a boat whisperer, someone who could commune with the soul of our new boat, and discover her *true* name. This took some time, as boat whisperers are not, it turns out, listed in the yellow pages. Eventually, after many inquiries and wrong turns, we found ourselves wandering down a decrepit dock in a floating community on Multnomah Channel, carrying *Moonbeam's* tiller and a bottle of rum, apparently the coin of the realm for boat whisperers. An ancient crone answered our knock, eyeing us suspiciously until we proffered the hooch and explained our errand. I cannot describe the bizarre rituals that followed, because I don't remember anything else about that night, and Deedie refuses to meet my eye when I ask. I can only say that most of the hair on my head eventually grew out again. The end result, however, was that the boat whisperer revealed how to discover our boat's *true* name: we must “ask the children.”

The children? OUR children? That seemed a dubious source of divine insight. But we had nothing to lose. We first approached our daughter Joie, who as usual had her nose in a book. She deflected our question, growling irritably at being bothered: “This book is finally getting good. Nausicaä just saved the shipwrecked Odysseus from the wrath of Poseidon.” We turned to our son, Kinley, who as usual was watching Japanese anime films. “I'll think about it



when this movie is over,” he grunted, “Nausicaä is using her glider to escape.” Disappointed, we were about to call the better business bureau and report a fraudulent boat whisperer when it struck us: our children had given us the name. But who the hell was Nausicaä? And what’s with the two little dots over the final letter?

Nausicaä (usually pronounced: nau-si-KAY-ə) appears in book 6 of the *Odyssey* as a young princess who rescues Odysseus and helps him reach his home after 20 years of exile, which he earned by incurring the wrath of several gods.

Her name, in ancient Greek, means “burner of ships,” an odd name for a princess of the realm, but not a bad name for a racing boat. The Japanese director Hayao Miyazaki borrowed Homer’s character to create *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind*, an anime film featuring a fast-moving princess, clad in blue and gold, who saves her valley from invaders, blows up their ships, and restores the balance of nature. After learning all this Deedie and I smote our respective foreheads and beamed idiotically at each other: we had found the true name of our blue and gold sailboat who, we hoped, would burn the competition.

The only thing left to do was convince the sea god to scratch *Moonbeam* out of his little black book and scribble in *Nausicaä*. Here we relied on John Vigor, author of *How to Rename your Boat and 19 Other Useful Ceremonies, Superstitions, Prayers, Rituals, and Curses* (Paradise Cay Publications, 2004).




*Nausicaä*, Frederic Leighton, 1878.

According to Vigor, the first step is to remove all physical traces of the old name. This turned out to be rather difficult, because the name *Moonbeam* had apparently been baked into her gelcoat, and resisted all strippers, polishes, blowtorches, etc. Nine long months passed before we finally discovered the right combination of chemicals and elbow grease needed to remove the name without destroying the gelcoat. It must have been an anxious interval for the boat, caught between two identities.

The second step is the de-naming ceremony. Here we made our first big mistake. Vigor cautions never to place the new name on the boat before the de-naming. In our eagerness, we plastered the new







bright yellow Nausicaä decal on both quarters the Sunday before the next Tuesday race, planning to do the ceremony, with the fleet in attendance, just before the race. No problem, we thought, as long as the boat stays in her slip and doesn't trespass on the sea-god's domain before the ceremony. But the best laid plans o' mice and men gang aft agley, as the poet says. A traffic jam got us to the dock long after all the other Merits had departed, and we barely had time to get to the start-line, much less perform a solemn ceremony. We could only hope the sea-god was busy ravishing a dryad somewhere and wouldn't notice this unknown vessel with the unfamiliar neon name.

What fools we mortals be. On the first windward rounding I felt a nameless dread overcome me. The tiller slipped from my nerveless fingers, the tiller extension jammed against the coaming, and my frantic heaving combined with rudder forces split the tiller into shards. I was nonplussed for a moment, but hubris made me shake my fist defiantly at the heavens, grip the jagged stem in my other gloved hand, and call for the spinnaker launch. The chute rose halfway, and then twisted itself into a gnarled knot the size of the ball that Nausicaä played with on the beach before rescuing Odysseus.

As the crew took the spinnaker down, untied the clews, and laboriously unwound the knot, I knelt in the cockpit. "O mighty Poseidon," I prayed in despair, "If we survive this calamity I vow to pour bubbly into your waters, and rename this boat after the maid Nausicaä, who saved Odysseus from your wrath and,

er, um, thwarted your designs. But that was 3000 years ago, and maybe you've forgotten it, or gotten over it. If you haven't, well, please don't hold her sins against us. Instead, let's focus on what really matters: kicking butt in this race. As I mentioned, there's some bubbly in it for you."

This devout prayer/bribe seemed to do the trick. The boat steadied under the newly hoisted spinnaker, and we powered up mid-river, chasing after the fleet, which had split into a Washington-side wing and an Oregon-side wing. A fortuitous gust of wind came barreling up the middle of the course, and we could only watch, mouths agape, as the gust carried us through the converging wings to the leeward mark, like Odysseus slipping between Scylla and Charybdis. With the sea-god's apparent favor, we rounded in the lead, flew down to the finish, and crossed the line three minutes ahead of the second place finisher. Who knew Poseidon had a taste for champagne?

At the docks we hastily prepared for the de-naming ceremony. But here we made our second, and most serious, mistake.

*To be continued.*



# SYSCO September 2012 Meeting Minutes

## From the Board

The SYSCO board meeting was held at Delta Park Elmers on Sept. 10, 2012.

Present were: Michael Nance, Liz Nance, Gary Bruner, Jan Burkhart, Steph Rice, Jim Sinclair and David Long.

Commodore Michael Nance rapped the gravel at 7:06 p.m. and began with a welcome. The reading of the old minutes was dispensed with.

## Committee Reports

**Financial Report:** Treasurer Tod Bassham reported via email that we have income of \$7,581.92 in membership dues. Total expenses as of this date are \$11,529.92, with a few bills still coming in from the race year. SYSCO balance as of Aug. 8, 2012 is \$11,529.92

**Membership:** Chair Jan Burkhart reports that we now have 128 members that have paid. There are 9 new members: Todd Boire, Tammy Kennedy, John Gries, Shawn Cole, Mark Kloepfer, Randy Wilcox and Terry O'shea. All members were voted into SYSCO. The board had a discussion about when to accept membership for the 2013 sailing year. No decision was made and it will be a topic in the October meeting.

**Racing:** No report.

**Cruising:** No report.



**Pancho II:** Gary Bruner reports that Pancho has been put to be bed for the winter.

**Program Chair:** Steph Rice, reports that the Sailors Award Dinner will be the best one ever. There is a going to be great door prizes, great food, awesome band and some great awards.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:16 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Secretary David Long.





# Many Feet Make Light Work

By Gary Bruner

SYSCO is such a great organization! Two great racing series on the river, weekend regattas, parties with good food and beer, banquets, cruises, fleet night, creative awards, socialization with good friends and more! SYSCO has been fortunate to have some incredibly dedicated volunteers serve to make all this possible, whether the task be to serve on the board, man the SYSCO booth at the Boat Show, organize a level fleet, do computer work on the website or membership, help on race committee, keep Pancho running sweet, cook burgers, or assist by doing some other productive job to keep this volunteer organization moving forward.

Most everyone knows that a minimum of eight hours of volunteer work per year is **REQUIRED** as a condition of membership. I think it's because the 'founding fathers' realized that people who are asked to do too much might easily become burnt out, and, thus, everyone is expected to share the workload. It's also often true that we support what we help create. SYSCO has approximately 125 members, or 250 pairs of hands and feet, or, potentially, 1,000 hours of volunteer time! Shared, the amount of work is not often overwhelming, but I wonder sometimes if we aren't expecting a few people to do more than their share for too long.

Now that the racing season has concluded and little remains beyond the Awards Party on Oct. 20, it's time to consider what we all might be willing and



able to do to make next year even more successful. Elections for officers will be coming soon and we have some positions to fill!

Thankfully, Warren Dalby volunteered to do one of the more difficult jobs in our club this year: that of Vice Commodore and Race Committee Chair. Traditionally, the person holding that position moves up to Commodore while the Commodore assumes



the Rear Commodore position, thereby inheriting Boat Show coordination. This year, however, Warren has decided that his skills do not include those more suited to Commodore, but has offered to re-assume the Race Committee Chairmanship for another year since he thinks he's now fully up to speed. This puts SYSCO in an unusual position of electing a Commodore who has not moved up directly from the V.C. job. If YOU would seriously consider filling this position for the 2013 year, you just need to get word to Michael Nance or another board member. Or, if you would like to NOMINATE someone you trust to head our club, that name would be appreciated as well. It might look good on a resume!

Whatever the case, there will be many jobs to fill, and tasks to be completed. I encourage all of us to consider seriously what we are willing to take on for the good of the entire community. If you've never served on the board or as a chair of a committee, maybe this is your year! If you have served in the past, but have had a few years off, perhaps you'd consider stepping up again, perhaps in a different role? It takes a lot of work to keep a club like this one first rate, and all our contributions are needed and appreciated. "Many feet make light work", or something like that....

Gary Bruner,  
Current Pancho Maintenance Chair

