

Starting Line

November 2013



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Small Yacht Sailing Club of Oregon

From the Commodore

The SYSCO St. Helens race/cruise has come and gone and our Historian, Oil Can Billy Sanborn ordered and awarded the commemorative race glasses. Many of us have St. Helens glasses that date back to the early '80's. That's SYSCO, a family that plays together stays together. We may be shorter, fatter and a bit more forgetful, but we're all mostly still here.

It's impressive to see how smoothly our races have gone this season. This is due largely to the tireless efforts of Race Captain Dalby. The volunteers and SYSCO racers deserve a nod of respect as well. Races are easier to successfully put in the books when the players are on top of it. In my workday world in the criminal justice system, we have saying: 'smart people stay out of court.' The vast number of SYSCO members who attended Dave Perry's Rules and Tactics seminar last spring came away with a better understanding of the sport and its shows.



Your Board is going to be tapping on shoulders in the near future to recruit some new blood to fill positions that, in keeping with our constitution, are going to have to be vacated. Don't think of it as a burden. As Billy Sanborn, member at large who shows up for every board meeting, recently reminded us, there is no way any SYSCO Board member can fail; the Board won't let them!

As I slide into the Rear Commodore chair, I look forward to joining Bill as yet another eternal member, who even though I will not have a vote eventually, will continue to attend the meetings just because they are so much fun!

See you on the water!

- Frank Colistro, Commodore

Dual Bridge Duel Delivers!

By Ryan Rodgers

There were skeptics, critics and fans of Rich Jones' *Dual Bridge Duel* when it was announced. But all of the naysayers were hushed when Mother Nature made a strong appearance from the south on the day of the event.

The skies were grey and threats of rain were plentiful but the wind was most dominated that morning. So much so that rumors of a capsized sport-boat prior to the start have spread about the sailing community. I say "Pics or it didn't happen."



Once the race began, skippers departed for their preferred mark. I can say with confidence that regardless of the direction you started, the frustration was found at nav marker 19. Fickle wind plagued most of us and drove some to the brink of sanity but what is a sailor to do but tack in the shifts and hope for current relief without scuffing the keel in the sand.

With the finish line at the transom and sudsy beverages divvied amongst the crew, smiles and laughter were proof that this race needs strong consideration for its return in 2014.

Big Two-Fisted River

By Tod Bassham

The curve of a river, as it sweeps around a hidden bend, speaks eloquently of possibility. Ever since Huck and Jim cast off their lines, a long river journey has meant a quest for freedom, if not life-altering transformation. In that spirit, my wife and I set off downriver on our little sailboat, accompanied by our little anxious dog, on a passage from Portland down to the hamlet of Skamokawa near the mouth of the Columbia, some 70 odd river miles.

And very odd miles they were, too. The river, it soon became clear, was not in the mood to grant us an easy passage. The first obstacle was the Burlington Northern railroad bridge. We radioed the tender, received a prompt response that the bridge would soon lift, and spun around in circles as the northbound Amtrak trundled by. Minutes then passed: ten, twenty, thirty. Was a second train expected? We called again, but received no reply other than the sight of the bridge tender sprinting down the trestles. The horn sounded apologetically, and after nearly an hour of waiting the bridge finally swung open for us.



Our next challenge was to sail safely past the Sauvie Island nude beach. Tradition, I explained to my wife, demands that passing sailors remove all sartorial impedimenta, and perform at least one sail change in the buff, as god and nature intended it. Alas, ancient

maritime tradition gets little respect in my household, and we glided past, clothed in prim Victorian rectitude.

We broke our sojourn overnight at the pleasant riverside burg of St. Helens, then proceeded downriver past the steaming orc-pits of Mordor, *i.e.* Longview. Downstream the forested cliffs rose on either side, and we sensed we were entering a darker, more primeval portion of the river. Until that point, the prevailing headwinds had been light, but as we approached the dogleg of Cape Horn we could see a line of white breakers marching toward us, where the oceanic winds whipped down the Cathlamet channel and around the cape. We took down the jenny, started the outboard and were about to drop the main when a 20-knot gust laid us over. The motor screamed, cavitating. The dog howled in panic. I howled in panic. After what



seemed an epic struggle, the main was lashed to the boom. We then faced the choice of motoring the longer deepwater route around Puget Island, or taking the shorter Cathlamet channel, recently de-buoyed due to shoaling. Depth sounder pinging, we chose the channel. Wind-waves were four feet, with green water flying over the deckhouse of our low-slung Merit 25. The depth swung wildly between seven and ten feet as we plunged up and down, but it was nearly high tide and we never touched bottom. After an hour of bashing we entered the relative calm of Cathlamet marina, too exhausted to make the remaining 10 miles across the open channel to our goal, Skamokawa.

In the calmer conditions next morning we set sail, enjoying a brisk reach downriver toward Skamokawa, known in its heyday as Little Venice. Skamokawa is situated at the head of three sloughs, with no road connections until a few generations ago, and for many happy years the residents of Skamokawa punted, rowed and sculled about to work and play. Steamboat landings connected the thriving little burg, once the third largest city in Washington, to the outer world. But the construction of a state highway in the 1930s killed off the steamboats, and the town withered. Still, many charming old homes and buildings remain. Our destination was Skamokawa Landing, a 1911 waterfront commercial building painstakingly restored, as the hobby of a retired construction engineer, to its former glory. The second floor dance hall had been converted to three spacious vacation rentals, one of which was ours for the night, if we could reach it.

Skamokawa Landing is located at the lower entrance to Steamboat Slough. A brief glance at the chart showed 16 feet at Skamakowa Landing at low water. A closer examination of the grey-tone, three-quarter scale chart would have revealed tiny little dots across most of the entrance, representing a submerged sandbar. A casual conversation with the locals would have yielded the advice that at low water sailboats should enter at the head of the slough, a couple of miles upstream. Alas, I chose the brief glance at the chart.

A hundred feet from the entrance we approached under mainsail, getting ready to drop the main and motor. Depth at that point was 45 feet, the edge of the main shipping channel. In the space of what seemed two boat lengths it shoaled to three feet, so rapidly the depth alarm didn't even have a chance to beep. We were fast aground on a lee shore.

After a few minutes of panic and self-recrimination, a plan emerged: kedge an anchor off-shore to keep the waves and wind from pushing us further onto the sandbar, and wait for the rising tide. Lacking a dinghy, we swam the anchor out on a life-jacket, and dropped it at the edge of the channel. An agonizing hour elapsed. At last we started bumping and grinding in the rising tide. Motor pushing, mainsail heeling, human windlass pulling, we kedged ourselves slowly back into deep water.

With the help of some local kayakers we found the head of the slough, and made our way safely to the dock at Skamokawa Landing. It was July 4th, and we sat on our balcony sipping wine and watched tiny sparklers and firecrackers on the Oregon shore trying to compete with the mortars and multi-stage intercontinental rockets rising from the Washington side. We reflected on what we had learned on our quest. For starters, we discovered that freedom's just another word for staying off keel-sucking sandbars. And as for life-altering transformations, well, we had emerged from various nautical crises with our marriage intact, so in this case *avoiding* life-altering transformations seemed good enough for us. Mostly we learned that it's a big river, a big two-fisted river, and that a little humility goes a long way.

We settled in for a good night's rest, and over the next couple of days enjoyed sailing around the beautiful islands and sloughs of the Columbia River estuary. Then it was time for the long passage back, which turned into an epic 70-mile spinnaker sleigh ride.

But that's another story.

SYSCO Board Meeting Minutes

The November board meeting began at 6:53 PM, at the Delta Park Elmer's. Attending members were; Tod Bassham, Bill Sanborn, Frank Colistro, Ryan Rodgers, Rich Jones Warren Dalby, and Jackie Pitter, Mike Nance, Gary Bruner, Jan Burkhart, Don Woodhouse, and Gary Whitney.

Treasury

After Revenue and expenses, the SYSCO account balance stands at \$6,953.77 dollars.

Race Officer Warren Dalby asked if the monthly treasury report could report the fees subtracted by Regatta Network for services rendered. Treasury Officer Tod Bassham saw the merit in the action, and agreed to do so.

Membership

Three new members were unanimously confirmed at the November board meeting. Thus far, 2013 saw 136 new and returning members.

The following sailors were unanimously confirmed as SYSCO members by the board: Brian Mazzola, Jeremy Plumb, Bruce Shibley, Brad Johnson, Kevin Driscoll, and Brian Terrett. Welcome to the club!

Racing

Racing Officer Warren Dalby is working on the Notice of Race flyers for the 2014 OCSA Race Book.



Social

The turnout for the 2013 SYSCO Awards Banquet was up from last year. With the success of the new venue, the board is faced with the dilemma of possibly scheduling the 2014 Awards Banquet at Kell's again. Look for a survey to provide feedback and preferences in you inbox soon!

Pancho

Pancho caretaker Gary Bruner has once again worked his magic saw to the necessary repairs and winterization for the season. Pancho now rests peacefully under a new tarp.

New Business

Frank Colistro put forth a motion allowing the OCSA Protest Board limited access to Regatta Network thus allowing them to post updates regarding protest hearings, and hearing outcomes. After some deliberation, the motion was unanimously passed.



2014 SYSCO Board Members

Commodore	Warren Dalby
Vice Commodore	Tod Bassham
Rear Commodore	Frank Colistro
Treasurer	Ryan Rodgers
Membership	Jan Burkhart
Secretary	Don Woodhouse
Social Chair	Jackie Pitter
P.R.O.	Rich Jones
Pancho Caretaker	Joe Hoffman

Sailor of the Year!



O.C.S.A has awarded Gary Bruner with the honorary ***Sailor of the Year trophy***. From buoy racing on the Columbia, to participating in the 2013 Oregon Offshore, to a well-earned 1st in division and 1st in class finish of the 2013 R.V.Y.C Swiftsure International Yacht Race, Gary has been a positive influence in the sailing community. But his generosity is the most noted at and in SYSCO functions. From maintain the mark boat Pancho to helping the SYSCO Board with functions and meetings, Gary's help and expertise should not go unrecognized. Thank You Gary!