

MRYC *Tidings*

SPRING 2010 VOLUME SEVEN ISSUE TWO

View from the bridge

By Forrest Cramer, Commodore

Last night I was sitting in my Boston hotel room watching the sun set over the Charles River as dozens of sailboats scurried back and forth in each of their attempts to be first across the mark. This morning as I write this missive, the sun is rising and the boats are neatly tucked against the shore. I have no idea who won, but I do know that the Red Sox squeezed out a 7 to 6 win with 6 runs in the 7th inning. And this means what? It means that our sailing season is descending quickly upon us!

We have had some great social events this past winter and several ahead of us as well. But sailing/boating is what we are really all about. Bill Volmar has put together some great cruises for us this summer. My hope is that there will be very few of you asking: "How was the cruise?" Because you will have been there and done that!

Jeff Anderson will be firing up the "Family Sail" program in July. We have five JY-15s that hate to sit around gathering dust, so grab the kids and join us on a Monday evening for an hour or so of sailing and a pizza after. More details to follow.

By the time you read this, the Commodore's Dinner will have come and gone. Based on M.E.'s track record, if you missed it, you missed another successful evening!

Although it never concerned me before, now that I am Commodore, I have this nagging fear that Dom, our extremely conscientious treasurer, will approach me saying: "Forrest, it is the Commodore's dinner, you're the Commodore, here's the bill, where's the check?" Speaking of the treasurer, or more appropriately the treasury: How is the club doing? Thanks to Dom and the Board we are moving ahead quite well. There has been a series of negotiations with Mystic Shipyard that has resulted in bringing down our financial outlay considerably.

This has not been without some cost to the club in that, for the time being, we no longer have exclusive access to the



Commodore Forrest Cramer

clubhouse. Basically we are in a pay-as-you-go process that gives us use comparable to the past. Members who wish to use the club for functions will be required to work with Mystic Shipyard. As our membership increases (and it is growing) we will be able to return to past agreements.

So don't forget that our membership drive continues with new members getting a break in the waiver of the initiation fee. And members get a break as well: \$300 off your dues in exchange for signing up a new member!

We are looking forward to your continued membership and to an exciting year of boating in 2010. ■

MYSTIC RIVER YACHT CLUB'S

Social Events

MYSTICS & AMAZONS

By Philip A. Shreffler

Of course it's cold in February, but MRYC is a year-round Club—and we mean always to take advantage of the opportunity to get together in an enjoyable or even improving way. Our gathering on the 27th involved both as we ventured to Mystic Seaport on a dual mission.

First, we made tracks to the Treworgy Planetarium where, in the middle of the day, the night sky stretched over us and we were educated about all the tricks of following stars in particular constellations to find north (well, that one wasn't new to us) as well as a foolproof method for determining east and west, and locating important stars by drawing certain imaginary lines and arcs across the heavens. Blinking and squinting in the daylight after the show, we toured various of the Seaport's exhibits until it was time for a small deputation to keep a pre-arranged appointment and make our way down to a vessel called *Amazon* to meet up with her crew.

Amazon is a British screw schooner, built in Southampton in 1885, and acquired in 1997 by her present owner, Ted Morgan-Busher, an ex-Royal Navy man who now makes his home in Malta. His crew is his 12-year-old son George, born in that island nation. The two left Malta last year headed for America, motor sailing by way of Gibraltar, the Canary Islands, the Cape Verde Islands, Barbados, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, St. Lucia, Antigua and Barbuda and Bermuda. Over the winter, *Amazon* fetched up at Mystic Seaport for a stay during the cold weather.

The 100-foot venerable vessel was originally built by one Tankerville Chamberlayne (a name worthy of P.G. Wodehouse) at his own yard at Southampton and designed to serve Chamberlayne as a yacht from which to watch regattas in the south of England and to cruise to France. The schooner is carvel-planked in teak and pitch pine on oak frames and has been converted from steam to diesel.

Happily, Ted and George accepted our invitation to head back to our clubhouse for some clam chowder and sea tales. The father and son duo are about as charming as any guests we've had at MRYC. Ted is bursting with sea stories and bonhomie, while George is as delightfully and intelligently talkative and articulate as a lot of the more interesting adults we've met.

To our great pleasure and to the Amazons' surprise, Ted and George weren't guests of the Club for long, since they were offered and accepted Honorary Membership that very evening. We presented them a Club burgee, and they very kindly reciprocated a few days later with the Royal Naval Sailing Association burgee that now hangs in our collection.

We're certainly happy to have the Morgan-Bushers on our rolls, both of them very dear to us already, and they plan to participate in Club events as often as they can for as long as they're on our shores. ■



British screw schooner, Amazon

DIESEL OIL AND CHILI:

A Surprisingly Good Combination

By Philip A. Shreffler

Never a Club to shy away from two great events on the same day, March 13th saw both a Diesel Engine Maintenance Workshop at the clubhouse, co-sponsored by MRYC and the Mystic Shipyard, followed in the evening by MRYC's Annual Chili-Cookoff competition.

Running from 10 a.m. until 2 p.m., the diesel engine workshop was well-attended by interested members. The event was presented by Scott Bowden, an instructor at the Sound School in New Haven and an ABYC-certified marine technician who provided maintenance information for those who spend time on the water for pleasure, whether under sail or power. Limited to fifteen boaters, the workshop covered such topics as the fuel, electrical, cooling and lubricating systems, the transmission and trouble-shooting engine problems—all of it geared to understanding an engine well enough to deal with problems at sea.

The event was, well, a certified success, with attendees taking notes, asking questions and following Scott's every move and suggestion with serious attention.

And after a day of greased elbows, if not elbow grease, what better way to unwind than to indulge in the savory collations brewed up by MRYC's finest chili chefs? This year, there were five chilis to sample and, purely coincidentally, five prizes. (No one goes unappreciated at MRYC!)

Judging the contest, along with Tom Hughes and Jessica Morrissey, was Honorary Member George Morgan-Busher, a self-proclaimed chili devotee. Whereas in previous years, judging has been a light-hearted (if nevertheless fairly responsible) enterprise, young George undertook his mission with a food critic's knitted brow, carefully tasting, making notes and agonizing over his decisions. It was almost as if he were being paid for the job (and who knows what kind of bribes he actually received).

The prize for the Best-Tasting Chili went to Philip Shreffler (and if you guess that your faithful reporter was not really responsible for that entry, you'd be right); M.E. Rich won for Best-Decorated

Table (that's really two awards for M.E., you see); guest Susan Coleman won the People's Choice Award; Catherine O'Brien the Not-Half-Bad-Chili Award; and Candy Pappas the Best Bribe for a Judge Award. With this kind of equality and fair play, it's no wonder we're the "Friendliest Yacht Club in New England." ■



Top photo: George Morgan-Busher took chili judging very seriously.

Middle photo: Club members at the diesel engine workshop.

Bottom photo: M.E.'s Hogwarts Hotpot Chili.

THE CRUISING SEASON: *MRYC at Sea*

By Philip A. Shreffler

For the 2010 season, Bill Volmar and his committee have done a truly excellent job of planning a wide variety (and a lot!) of cruises for our Club.

It all kicks off on Saturday, June 12th, with a cruise over to East Harbor at Fishers Island for a raft-up and a return home that day. *Amazon* and her crew have expressed the hope that they'll be able to join our fleet, making the 12th a day to remember if they can.

This will be followed on June 25th - 27th by an overnighter to Watch Hill, R.I., that will include a dinner at the Watch Hill Yacht Club on Saturday, returning on Sunday.

July starts off with a tentatively-scheduled short jaunt around to the east side of Masons Island for a picnic and a splendid view of the 4th of July fireworks launched from Masons Island Yacht Club.

Fireworks are again the theme of a voyage over to Three-Mile Harbor, Long Island, N.Y., on July 16th - 18th. There'll be a picnic on the beach and, yes, airborne pyrotechnics once again.

August will see another day trip to Fishers Island (West Harbor this time) on the 7th, with a stop at Flat Hammock Island for a picnic on the way home.

MRYC CRUISING SCHEDULE 2010

- The Watch Hill Cruise on June 25th and 26th
- The Three Mile Harbor, NY, Cruise on July 16th through 18th
- Fishers Island (West Harbor), August 7th
- The Montauk, NY, Cruise on August 20th through the 22nd
- The Greenport, NY, Wine Cruise on September 10th through the 12th
- The Connecticut River Fall Color Cruise, October 2nd through the 3rd

MRYC yachts moored in Essex, Conn.



On August 20th - 22nd the Club will cruise to Montauk, N.Y., for a picnic on the beach, our recurring and challenging dinghy race and, for the survivors, dinner in town.

In September the sailing season isn't over, and we're not done yet! On the 10th - 12th we'll reprise our annual—and very popular—Wine Cruise to Long Island, N.Y., for a tour of a number of vineyards followed by a group dinner. As always, those without boats can take the ferry to Long Island and join the tour.

And finally, on October 2nd and 3rd we'll end the season on an autumnally-colorful note by cruising up the Connecticut River to enjoy dinner and a stage show in East Haddam.

All we can say is: What a season, and thank you, Bill! ■



MRYC would like to extend that warmest of welcomes to new members Walter and Lynn Lincoln of Mystic. Walter sails a Pearson 365 and has a vast maritime experience that will make for some great sea stories around the clubhouse.

Welcome aboard, Walter and Lynn!

MYSTIC RIVER YACHT CLUB'S *Commodore's Dinner*



cake, flying a pair of MRYC burgees and manned by a little, plastic, rough-neck crew—each of whom had the photographic face of one of our flag officers affixed to it. It was an ingenious touch and, on close inspection, just a little creepy to behold.

But then, the whole point of the Commodore's Dinner is centered on fun and good fellowship. If we had a motto, it might be "Nil Gravitatis," which I'm informed by those who know for sure, is Latin for "Nothing Serious." That's probably why members looking out our southwestward facing windows, and observing a giant trawler up on jackstands, seemed semi-serious about running

By Philip A. Shreffler

Our Club's traditional opening to the boating season is the Annual Commodore's Dinner on April 25th, although this year—what with lowering clouds and chilly rain—it didn't seem as if the season could come soon enough. Nevertheless, the clubhouse was decorated and fitted-out for gracious dining by our sterling Social Committee, including M.E. Rich, Anne Wakim, Joan Gannon, Holly Phelps and Catherine O'Brien (and our profound apologies to those who helped and whose names we've left out).

Tables were set with gleaming dinner- and flatware as well as model sloops and mirrors that scattered the twinkling lights of votive candles. The bar in the front foyer was generously stocked (dark-n-stormies were popular on the dark and stormy evening), while the make-shift dance floor nearby was scattered with blue balloons, a swirling sea for those who later danced through it—though the more dark-n-stormies that were consumed, the more balloons were heard to explode to the eruption of gleeful laughter.

As for the dinner itself, a buffet table was laden with comestibles: appetizers in proliferation, a variety of salads, chicken and pork entrees, and a very special dessert. This latter was a pirate ship-shaped



a gangplank across from our veranda and holding "happy hour" on board—if not just commandeering the vessel, pirate-fashion, for a mobile clubhouse. Oh, what a little rum and ginger beer will do! ■

M Y S T I C ' S I R I S H P A R A D E

MRYC's Adventure

By Philip A. Shreffler

Every year since our inception, Mystic River Yacht Club has fielded an entry in the town of Mystic's Irish Day Parade. Sometimes things don't work out (such as last year when the trailer that was to carry our powerboat float broke an axle at the last minute and we had to make a go of it with a decorated truck and the bagpipers talents of Kevin Miller). On the other hand, things usually come together beautifully, as they did this March 21st.

We knew that we were going to use one of the Club's JY-15 racing dinghies as the basis for our St. Paddy's float. And it was through the good offices of John Wakim that we had a truck and trailer so the little boat could sail the streets of Mystic. Bill Volmar managed to rig a short mast on the vessel so that it would not tangle with live power lines or the low girders of the bascule bridge.

But little did many Club members know that the inventiveness of M.E. Rich would conjure up a veritable St. Patrick himself to pilot the boat through the parade (the only representation of St. Patrick, by the way, on any float—while MRYC was the only yacht club to be a part of the procession, among the more than 100 entries).

For several nights the Rich-Shreffler household was an odd place, with M.E. fashioning a white-bearded, wide-eyed head, carefully cutting and sewing a tall bishop's miter, decorating a white surplice with a huge golden Celtic cross and producing limbs from flesh-colored door-draft bolsters. Finally, what at first

looked a little like Frankenstein's workshop resulted in the creation of a life-sized St. Patrick (life-sized on the assumption that folks in the saint's time were about five feet tall).

On the morning of the parade, St. Patrick made his way to the MRYC clubhouse where he climbed up on the foredeck of our proud Irish curragh, surrounded by green, orange and white dress-ship flags, while a large Club burgee fluttered at the masthead. And off we went to the parade's marshalling area at Mystic Seaport.

There was naturally quite a long wait for the MRYC crew to get underway, being a little over halfway back in the starting order. But at length we pulled out into the streets of Mystic, with John at the wheel of the truck, while Commodore Forrest Cramer, Bill Volmar and Philip Shreffler (bedecked in green Club gear) unfurled Irish flags and waved to the crowd.

Doing real yeomen's duty were Annie Wakim and Suzanne Cramer who marched ahead of the truck carrying our big Mystic River Yacht Club banner.

It was wonderfully gratifying to receive so much applause from those fine folks lining the parade route—and particularly so when obviously-pleased spectators shouted out, "Hey, look! It's St. Patrick!"

Absolutely first-rate Club imagination and cooperation in putting together such a great float—plus the singular honor for MRYC of having one of our most devoted members, Jessica Morrissey, as Grand Marshal—made 2010's Mystic Irish Parade one of the most memorable yet. ■



St. Patrick aboard MRYC Float



Suzanne Cramer and Anne Wakin bearing MRYC's banner.

M Y S T I C ' S I R I S H P A R A D E

The Grand Marshall's View

By Jesssica Morrissey

I was extremely surprised and equally honored to be the 2010 Grand Marshal for the Mystic Irish Parade. To get a bird's eye view of the parade go to www.mysticirishparade.org and view the parade in "slide show" mode! It really gives you the feeling of experiencing it all over again! By the way, I was still doing "the Wave" the week after!

Just a little recap of the events in Mystic's "Irish Month": We started off with a huge "Irish Dinner" at the Mystic Hilton where the Grand Marshal is introduced and gives a speech. Yikes! Believe it or not, this was nerve wracking for me until I got up and did my "I'm a Murphy, I'm a Morrissey" speech to hundreds of friends, relatives and new friends. Next came the stellar "Irish Concert" with Sean McGuinness' Dublin City Ramblers (Ireland's premiere folk performers) followed by an after-concert gathering at the infamous Harp & Hound! Then there was The Parade on March 21st! And the last weekend encompassed Irish Films at the Mystic Independent Theater featuring The Life and Times of Liam Clancy, Live at the Yellow Bittern and an intimate concert with Aoife Clancy. I was hooked! The final nightcap of the month was the "Irish Awards" held at the Harp & Hound in Mystic.

And now to The Parade: We were totally and absolutely blessed to have the warmest and sunniest day in March. Just ask Hartford, New Haven and Newport which did not fare well at all! People kept joking that I had an "in" with the weatherman! I would just laugh and point to the heavens and say, "You can thank HER!"

The 7th Annual Mystic Irish Parade was the largest in our history (with 104 units, 1,400 participants and 11 bagpipe bands) and was bigger even than Boston's celebrated event! Attendance was over 30,000.

This is a Parade "For the Community, By the Community." It should be noted that all excess

monies go to local charities! As part of the Grand Marshal's "imaginary powers," the most exciting one was to "muster up" more participants. I was so on that! I added MASH (Mystic Area Shelter and Hospitality), Enders Island, Fidelco Guide Dogs, the Ledyard and Stonington Police Departments' K-9 Officers, Ringo and Fritz, and the Stonington Crew Team, just to name a few. The Wells Fargo Stagecoach was a great addition and real crowd pleaser.

Just like your first kiss, your first experience riding in the Parade is unforgettable. My first "voyage" along the historic Parade route was in 2005 aboard the Irish Myst, one of MRYC's JY-15 fleet. I can't describe the feeling of "sailing" over the famous Mystic bascule bridge in a Parade float other than to say that it's exhilarating! (This is a family newsletter, after all).

It is no wonder that the Mystic River Yacht Club, the "Friendliest Yacht Club in New England" was the only yacht club represented in Mystic's Parade! I saluted our members on the grandstand and will do so for the years to come. "I'm a Murphy, I'm a Morrissey," and I belong to the Friendliest Yacht Club! How about you? ■



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Jessica Morrissey, Grand Marshall, in the Mystic Irish Parade

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MRYC

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CAPT. BILL PICKNEY, MRYC MEMBERS ATTEND CHARITY EVENT

By Bill Volmar

When I received an email from Dick Lathrop, director of the New London-based the Sea-Legs Charity, about reception featuring the celebrated Capt. William Pickney, I thought, "Here's an opportunity to help young sailors in the New London area and have fun too." Several other MRYC members—Wally and Pat Lohr, Ed and Holly Riozzi, Jay McKernan and Angela Valliere—joined Joan and me at the Shennecossett Yacht Club on Friday, April 16, for this wine and cheese reception featuring Capt. Pickney, first captain of the "freedom schooner" *Amistad*, the first African-American solo global circumnavigator, and also an Honorary Member of MRYC. Bill gave a fascinating account of his experiences aboard the *Amistad* during its recent visit to Cuba. He also riveted his audience with all the details of his 1990-91 circumnavigation, from west to east, of the earth's oceans, sailing his Valiant 47 *Commitment*. (The full story may be found in Bill's book *As Long As It Takes: Commitment's Circumnavigation*, Bunker Hill Publishing, 2006).

Sea-Legs is a non-profit organization offering maritime experiences and education to children who would not, otherwise, have boating opportunities, and it's typical of both Capt. Pickney and our membership to support such worthy causes. MRYC is also very lucky to have Capt. Pickney as an Honorary Member. ■



Capt. Bill Pickney surrounded by MRYC members.