

# MRYC *Tidings*

SUMMER 2010 VOLUME SEVEN ISSUE THREE

## *View from the bridge*

*By Forrest Cramer, Commodore*

In my previous comments, I said that Jeff Anderson would be firing up the “Family Sail” program in July. Guess what: he did just that. Well, sort of. Little or no wind made for not much “firing up,” but all had a great time.

I am using my Zodiac as a “chase” boat and went to the rescue of one JY getting too close to the slips. My engine kept cutting out (the idle was set way too low), so it got a little confusing there for a moment. Nothing straightens a macho guy out quicker than to hear a seven year old sing out, “Doesn’t anyone know what they are doing!”

There have been three outings so far and will probably be at least two more by the time this newsletter makes it to your mailbox. We will still have several Family Sails left, so drop by on a Monday by 5:15 p.m. and join the fun! By the way, if you have a small boat that could serve as a chase boat, we could use your help. Just think, you too could be embarrassed by a seven-year-old!

Socials continue to dazzle thanks to our Major Entertainment Representative, better known as M.E. Rich, and her capable committee. Whether it is a BBQ, a holiday celebration or just a gathering around the scuttlebutt for “Sail Tales,” it is a fun time for all.

Several club cruises have been planned and some already taken. Unfortunately, we were unable to join the Three-Mile Harbor cruise due to prior work and family commitments. With the fireworks display as a highlight I am really sorry we missed it. If you have the opportunity to join one of the cruises, take it!

Some of our members are off on their own cruises, Bill Volmar headed to Maine and Dom DeGaetano cruising to the Cape. No matter whether you join an organized cruise or do your own, each is an adventure. Whatever you do, take notes and pictures as you could be the next “Sails Tales” star attraction.



*Commodore Forrest Cramer*

The boating season is moving towards the half-way mark and our recent class with Sea Tow, the Coast Guard and the Coast Guard Auxiliary spurs me to suggest that this is a good time to take a look at your safety equipment. Make sure it works and is not buried under “stuff.” By the way, have you ever jumped into the water with your auto-inflatable life jacket on? Not a bad idea to see how that feels, but make sure you have a replacement kit on hand.

We are looking forward to your continued membership and to a safe and exciting boating season. ■

# A FINE BEGINNING TO THE *Cruising Season*

By Philip A. Shreffler

Bill Volmar, Jay McKernan, Wally Lohr, Tom Hughes and the rest of the MRYC Cruise Committee have done a stellar job in lining up a record number of sojourns, both near and farther away, for the 2010 season. And now, only two months into that season (at this writing), Club members have already undertaken four cruises—with more on the way. There have been one-day trips to Fishers Island's East Harbor on June 12th and to Mike Cavanaugh's on Masons Island to see the MIYC 4th of July fireworks. Alas, I was unable to make either of those events, but fortunately did manage two of the longer cruises thanks to Dom DeGaetano who invited me along as crew.

June 26th was one of those warm and light-air days that we've had so many of in southern New England this summer. In the morning, Dom and I cast off the mooring in Mystic Harbor in Dom's *Mary O* to wend our way over to Stonington and into Little Narragansett Bay to join the Club cruise to Watch Hill. We'd have set sail if we'd seen any point in it but, as it was, motoring seemed the most sensible and certainly the quickest way to join our fleet. We worked around the northwest tip of Sandy Point and into the well-marked channel that led to Watch Hill Cove.

On the way, we were lucky enough to see the famous 1930s commuter yacht *Aphrodite* chugging past us, laden with passengers. *Aphrodite* is a boat on which virtually every single stick of wood has been replaced over time, and Dom and I engaged in a philosophical discussion regarding the point at which a vessel so "restored" is no longer the original boat. Well, it's something to think about.

Reaching the cove, we found Bill Volmar and Joan Gannon's *Miracles* moored (they had arrived the day before), and we slid in and picked up a Watch Hill Yacht Club mooring nearby. It wasn't long before Pat and Wally Lohr aboard *Sea Bear* and Tom Hughes on *Unconditional* joined us. Since it's so easy to drive over to Watch Hill if one is passionately interested in the shopping there, we opted instead for an afternoon cocktail party aboard *Miracles*, having been collected by the WHYC launch and its very friendly driver.

The conversation was so agreeable and the time passed so quickly that we were surprised when we



had to return to our boats and dress for dinner. Soon we were ferried in to the yacht club whose westward-facing windows afforded us, from our table, a wonderful view of the cove and ultimately of a lovely sunset. Both the food and company were excellent, and WHYC a fine host to our cruisers. We wended our way back to our boats in gathering darkness, and while there may have been more gamming, Dom and I fairly soon thereafter retired to our cabins and slept the sleep of the righteous.

After breakfast next day, we came on deck to find high gray clouds and a dense fog sitting like a blanket on land and water alike and scarcely a breath of wind. We said our goodbyes to the little fleet and motored out of the bay on our way back to Mystic and past a Stonington we could not see. Occasionally, something would materialize out of the fog, like the Concordia yawl we saw that seemed a ghost ship on an infinite ocean.

The weather was far more obliging for the Club's Three-Mile Harbor cruise on July 17th. Dom and I, again in *Mary O*, made our way under beautifully cloudless skies out of Fishers Island Sound, through the Race at slack tide, down around the Ruins at Gardiner's Island (and somebody will have to tell me the "ruins" of what!) and ultimately into the narrow channel leading into East Hampton, New York's Three-Mile Harbor. This time, we were clearly the latecomers since, naturally, *Miracles* had arrived the previous day, and so had Tom Hughes and Sara Magida in *Unconditional*, the latter of which was on a mooring while the former was rafted on her port side. So we eased in to starboard of *Unconditional*, arranged lines and rafted to starboard.





Top Left photo: Aphrodite; Top Middle photo: Bob Davis and Jay McKernan aboard Unconditional; Top Right photo: Sara Magida and Ginnie Seccombe on Firecracker; Bottom photo: MRYC yachts rafted up in Three-Mile Harbor.  
Please see more photos on page 6.

I was impressed to find quite a crowd here, as Angela and Jay McKernan and Karen and Bob Davis had accompanied Bill and Joan in *Miracles*. But we were soon informed that further west in the harbor, Ted Mercier and Ginnie Seccombe's *Firecracker* was on its own mooring, while even further west the Club's big power yachts—Pat and Wally's *Sea Bear* and Holly and Ed Riozzi's new *Barefootin'*—were rafted together. When Cathy and Seamus O'Brien aboard *Blue Persuasion* motored in and rafted to *Mary O*'s starboard, we were seven boats and sixteen Club members strong.

All afternoon, there was a seeming flurry of dinghies buzzing among the boats, delivering and exchanging folks to various impromptu visits, accompanied by the inevitable cocktails. When dinner time came round, our fleet of dinghies headed east to the docks of the Harbor Bistro where we commandeered a table long enough for our gregarious gang.

But on this cruise, dinner wasn't the highlight of the evening. Back aboard our boats after dark, we were treated to the pyrotechnic excellence of Grucci Brothers fireworks over the harbor—an annual East Hampton tradition begun years ago by famed *Paris Review* founder George Plimpton. For those of us who missed the Masons Island Yacht Club's fireworks on our Club's cruise of the 4th, this was the fulfillment of every American's July desire.

It's really excellent when so many MRYC yachtsmen (and women) can gather on the water instead of just at the clubhouse. That's the glory of cruising. But while everyone else intended to stay on at East Hampton the next day, Dom and I had to get back to Connecticut. So we slipped out of the raft-up, had a minor disagreement with the ground (of which there

was more than of water at low tide near the channel), and finally got underway. On the return trip, we experienced a prime example of ignoring the rules of the road when a gigantic power yacht, about the size of block of apartments, roared past us at full speed. Dom turned *Mary O* into the frighteningly-huge wake just as it hit our bows, raced over the deck, slammed thorough the open dodger window and not only soaked us but poured down the companionway. But even a good dousing didn't dampen what had been a great weekend of good old MRYC camaraderie and conviviality.

By the time this appears, the Club will already have completed its August 7th picnic cruise to Fishers Island and Flat Hammock. And keep on top of emails about the forthcoming cruise to Montauk on August 20th-22nd, the Annual Wine Cruise to Greenport on September 10th-12th, and the October 2nd-3rd Connecticut River cruise. ■

# Social Scene

By M.E. Rich

May 14th brought a bevy of MRYC members to the gala Sail Tales presentation of the 2009 Cruise Season Video by Bill Volmar. Technical difficulties occupied the first half hour or so, despite well intentioned suggestions from the assembled Not-So-Geeky-Squad. It was feared we'd have to ask the pizza delivery kid for assistance but, lo and behold, Anne-Marie Foster got the connection up and running so we were able to tip the kid without looking like totally lame geeze—er—make that geekers. Fortified with mozzarella and merlot we had a spectacular evening's entertainment, reliving those glorious days of 2009 and preparing for a 2010 just as glorious.

The summer season seemed to start in high gear and the schedule sailed along as if in a Beaufort Force Five, verging on Six! Our annual Memorial Day Barbecue on May 31st was well attended, with plenty of burgers and hot dogs on hand provided by the Social Committee and the usual fine buffet supplied by Club members. However June weather was untypically unsettling, delaying many a launching, and even targeting our *Amazon* friends with a particularly nasty blow. Ted and George therefore missed the Club's Kickoff Social on the 11th and the Picnic Cruise on the 12th, and even now they're slogging through restoration work, to say nothing of paperwork. Stout fellas! In conjunction with the Watch Hill Cruise at the end of the month we celebrated a Dinner on the Deck on Sunday evening June 27th. The theme, "Some Enchanted Evening," was somewhat subverted by non-tropical fog rolling up the river but we managed to enjoy ourselves nonetheless, with Holly's succulent pulled pork, and island sesame chicken, herbed rice, sweet potato pone, and cakes (pineapple or coconut or both) to finish the feast.

For the first full month of summer we gathered on July 5th for another holiday barbecue bringing along all sorts of nourishing fare to enjoy in air-conditioned comfort. And though not strictly a Social Committee event, co-chair Anne Wakim managed to surprise husband John with a Lebanese Luau on July 11th featuring a fantastic array of Middle Eastern dishes, and a happy throng of members mingling with John's family and friends, and an especially entertaining epic, poetic tribute by kid brother Jim Wakim.

Plenty of on-the-water boating opportunities made for a busy month and resulted in a slightly different format for the July 23rd Sail Tales Social. We decided to go with an interactive, performance-based evening of Tall Sail Tales, encouraging members to relate a personal adventure, be it misbegotten or momentous. Members were advised to compete with their jauntiest yarns backed up by some sort of evidence if possible—with or without twenty-seven eight-by-ten color glossy photographs with circles and arrows and a paragraph on the back of each one. Rules were fairly elastic: "Illustrations welcome! Descriptive Mermaid encounters highly desirable! Saucy vocabulary encouraged, also liberal use of adjectives and adverbs! NO fishing stories unless fish is named Nemo, Bruce or Moby Dick." (Okay, okay, not everyone remembers that the shark in *Jaws* actually had a name.) A modest prize for Best Nautical Narrative was awarded to Ted Morgan-Busher for his horrifying description of being battered by lightning (see this issue's article), but he had quite a lot of competition from the Old Salts gathered 'round the pizza boxes, and Young Salt George as well. Fred Allard had also undergone a





lightning strike just that week, showing some charred remains to a dismayed audience. Anne Wakim alluded to a mysterious cruise ship incident in, or near, the Bermuda Triangle while M. E. read her memoir of a scuttled yacht in 1977. Kevin supplied an approved Fish-related Tale about tackling “Bruce” in his underwear (Kevin’s, not Bruce) which ended in Spielbergian fashion (think Indiana Jones versus the Moor with the scimitar.) And Philip described an inadvertent split he performed between dock and

dinghy, a maneuver many of us recognized from personal experience.

August brings us another Dinner on the Deck, on August 15th, catered by Grossman’s Seafood—save the date! And what say you, mates, to another Sail Tales on the 27th? Get to know the MRYC crew in dashing detail! How about a jolly sea chantey or two to accompany our sprightly sagas? Limber up your larynx and meet us at the Clubhouse for a typically high spirited Social! ■

*Top photo:  
John Wakim  
surrounded by  
birthday celebrants;*

*Bottom Right photo:  
Sail Tales Social  
at the clubhouse;*

*Bottom Left photo:  
Tropical Night  
Dinner on the Deck.*



# M Y S T I C   R I V E R   Y A C H T   C L U B ' S

# *Safety at Sea*

## W O R K S H O P

*By Philip A. Shreffler*

Presenters from the U.S. Coast Guard Station New London, the Coast Guard Auxiliary, the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection and from SeaTow made MRYC's first Safety at Sea Workshop on May 15th an unqualified success.

The well-attended workshop covered topics including suddenly finding yourself in command of a vessel after the skipper has been incapacitated, a man-overboard situation, proper use of radio communication in an emergency, fire fighting, and a host of other data that many who venture out in watercraft often fail to consider.

It's worth noting that the most common cause of inshore accidents on the water is collision, but, significantly, the most common cause of death is falling overboard. And while doing your best to observe the rules of the road, it's always prudent to assume that "the other guy doesn't know what he's doing."

The overarching messages of the workshop were severalfold: Everyone on board a vessel should understand that vessel's operation, from simple steering to the location of fire extinguishers and PFDs, as well as the functioning of the engine and the electronics. It's extremely important to make a plan for the various kinds of emergencies a crew may face. And, above all, exercise calm and common sense.



*Ashley Green and Pam Barranson, USGC Station New London*

Unfortunately, it's impossible to encapsulate all of this workshop's critical information in a brief article. That's why, perhaps, MRYC will wish to think about offering this event again in the future. But in the meantime, it's every boater's duty to him- or herself and any crew or passengers to become as educated as possible about safety at sea. ■

### More cruising photos from article, page 2.

*Bottom Left photo: Cathy O'Brien on Blue Persuasion;*

*Upper Right photo: Watch Hill Yacht Club;*

*Lower Right photo: MRYC cruisers dining at the Watch Hill YC.*





# Schooner *Amazon*

## STRUCK BY LIGHTNING

By Philip A. Shreffler

The 1885 screw schooner *Amazon*, owned and crewed by MRYC Honorary Members Ted and George Morgan-Busher was to have motored out to—and anchored—our June 12th raft-up in Fishers Island’s East Harbor. Ted had even invested in a large Club burgee of a fitting size to fly at the masthead of the 100-foot-long yacht. But only one week before the event, a violent storm rocked Mystic Seaport where *Amazon* lies, and the vessel took a direct lightning strike. In fact, Ted and George had intended by now to be heading back across the Atlantic, bound for their home in Malta. Instead, waiting for the vessel’s insurers to act, and the repairs the insurance will cover, have kept them here in Mystic at their Seaport berth. Since it’s getting late in the year to attempt an Atlantic crossing, it is unclear at this point whether and where *Amazon* and her crew may have to spend the coming autumn and winter. We, of course, are plumping for their remaining in Mystic—if it should be necessary for them to stay on this side of the Atlantic.

A nearly vertical lightning bolt hit the historic schooner’s main mast. “The 125-year-old Victorian yacht is having the last laugh,” Ted said. “She appears to be undamaged except for some minor scorching and perhaps a crack at the top of the main mast. There’s a clear zig-zag line down the top five feet of the mast tracing the course of the lightning, which dissipated through the shrouds and a forestay. The damage to the electronics and batteries, though, is very comprehensive owing to the electromagnetic pulse.” The EMP seems to have been responsible for the damage on board, since none of the wiring was at all affected. Still, *Amazon* was hauled by the Seaport’s shiplift to survey her for any problems in the hull.

Young George was in his cabin, at 6:50 a.m. on June 5th, when the strike occurred, and Ted was in the shower directly beneath the mainmast where, he says, the hair stood up on the back of his neck seconds before there was a “tremendous flash of light and a large bang.” Fortunately, neither Ted nor George was injured, partly owing to the dissipation of the lightning through the rigging and also because *Amazon*’s plumbing is of plastic.

But MRYC members have been treated roughly by the weather this season. On July 20th Sue and Fred Allard’s Clearwater 35 *SeaScape*, lying just south of the Seaport, was also hit by lightning, sustaining much worse damage to her wiring and electronics. *SeaScape* is, at this writing, out of the water for repairs at the Mystic Shipyard. ■

Left photo: *Amazon* on the hard;  
Center photo: Ted Morgan-Busher telling the tale in the Clubhouse;  
Lower photo: *Amazon* lying at the Seaport before the storm





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WELCOME  
*to new members!*

MRYC would like to extend the warmest of welcomes to new members Danielle Hinton and James Harmon; Sally Noyes Dowling and Rudy Peckinpaugh; and Shirley and Barry Clarkson. The Club looks forward to a long, happy association with these fine folks. Welcome aboard!

## FINAL CRUISES FOR THE SEASON:

- The Fishers Island-Flat Hammock Cruise on 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 on October 2nd & 3rd