



The Potter Yachter

Newsletter of the Longest Lasting West Wight Potter Club in the World

March 2023



Photo credit: Goose Gossman

“The Best Investment in My Life”

A Conversation with Jerry Barrilleaux

by George Wehrfritz

Where to begin? Jerry Barrilleaux's stories fly like his boats on runs to the finish line and have captivated Potter Yachters since the club's inception. Between them, he's scouted out hidden sailing, served a stint as commodore, helped members and non-members alike tune their riggings, and pulled coins from our children's ears. In an early cartoon he drew for this newsletter, a P-14 sails past the cabin cruiser Stink Pot at a fuel dock with petrol offered for an outrageous 85 cents per gallon. Jerry's caption: Eat Your Heart Out!

And so we have. Watching Jerry skipper his P-14 Breezy and his HMS-18 Sunshine to more race wins than we can count. Literally. Our attempted tally foundered on a 14-year gap in the club's official record, though we know he won the inaugural Oakland Estuary Race in 1980 and, most recently, the Cruiser Challenge's large boat category in 2015. To anyone wishing to challenge the supposition that Jerry is the winningest Potter sailor yet to grace the seas: we are open to hearing it, yet skeptical.

(Story continued pg 5)

Please renew your [membership](#). (Dues \$50/family)

Mail a check made out to Potter Yachters to Goose Gossman, 865 West I Street, Benicia, CA 94510

Ship's Stores for sale. Order from Goose:

Show your colors! Fly an official Club Burgee on your next sail!

Burgees	\$25.00
Bumper Stickers	\$ 2.50
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Or head over to the CafePress website and buy a Cap, Stein, or T-Shirt with the club logo on it.

Visit: <http://www.cafepress.com/potteryachters>

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The Commodore's Corner

By Phil Marcelis

I know we need the rain, but it's been a wet February. My boat, which lives on the driveway, has been collecting leaves and somehow, it's also collecting bilgewater... which I've been mopping up after every heavy rain. Such insults will not stand! But the great deck-leak hunt will need to wait just a few more weeks as I'm completely consumed with preparations to sell our home of 18 years.

I truly can't wait to get back out on the water, and I'm disappointed that I wasn't able to follow through on my plans to sail the February Richmond event nor even drive out for dinner on Saturday. I look forward to putting my boat in a slip in Berkeley sometime in May, when I should be able to go sailing at the drop of a hat whenever the whim hits me. I'll be more than happy to take crew for some weekday sailing, so give me a call if you're interested. I've had a great time whenever I've had another Potter Yachter on my boat or vice-versa. We've got a lot of interesting folks in our club. In fact, George Wehrfritz should be publishing the first in an occasional series of interviews that we plan to do over the coming year, as a means of remembering the club's origins and honoring long-time members. I'm really looking forward to reading this issue's interview with Jerry Barrilleaux.

Regards,

Phil —

Club Events on the Horizon

potter-yachters.org/calendar

March 18 th	Coyote Point (St. Pat's Sail)	Phil Marcelis
RSVP for Corned Beef & Cabbage Saturday night at the Coyote Point Yacht Club - contact Coyote Point to get a slip Friday and/or Saturday night—there will be space at the guest dock. Launch at Coyote point or Redwood City launch ramp (and sail over). Head out to sail from Coyote Point before 10am. Easy to Intermediate sail depending on wind.		
April 1-2	Richmond to Alameda (OYC)	Eric Zilbert
Depending on wind and tides, this can be an intermediate to experienced sail—we will be crossing the "Slot" where you should be prepared to shorten sail. Launch in Richmond and sail to Alameda. Overnight in Alameda. Return to Richmond Sunday.		
April 22-23	Morro Bay	Pete Evans
Launch at the Morro Bay launch ramp and stay at the Yacht Club. Depending on wind and tides, this can be an intermediate sail.		
April 29-30	Moss Landing	Bud Kerner
Come join the Potter Yachters for two days of whale watching and sailing. Both days we will sail out of the Elkhorn Yacht Club in Moss Landing. Monterey Bay is not a bay—it is the ocean. This time of year, it can be very sporting. For this reason, your skill level should be intermediate to experienced.		



The Potter Yachter St. Patrick's Day Weekend Sail and Dinner at Coyote Point Yacht Club March 18, 2023

sailhost: Phil Marcelis

You're invited to join us for a St. Patrick's Day Weekend Sail. We plan to launch at the Coyote Point Launch Ramp around 9am on March 18, go for a sail, and then meet at [Coyote Point Yacht Club](#) for happy hour and a fine corned beef dinner. We can overnight at their guest dock with RSVP. We're under the impression that CPYC will have Irish dancers, like they did last time! Another option is to launch in Redwood City and sail over to CPYC. CPYC's Port Captain has dock space. Be sure

Directions to Coyote Point:

Heading **north** on Hwy 101, take the Peninsula Ave. exit (417B), turn right onto Airport Blvd, left at Peninsula Ave/Coyote Point Dr and continue to the park gate.

Heading **south** on Hwy 101, take the Poplar Ave exit (417), turn right onto Humboldt St, right onto Peninsula Ave, continue to the park gate.

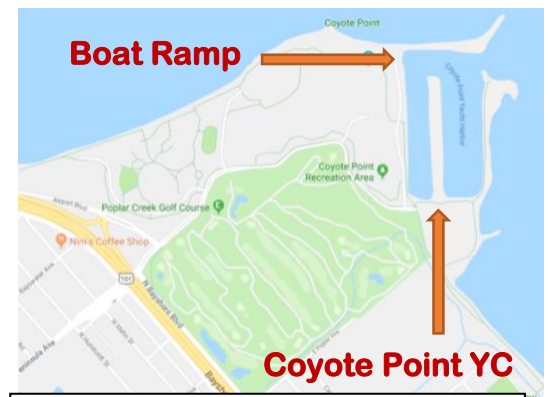
to RSVP to commodore@potter-yachters.org!

If you want, you can drive to CPYC for dinner at 6pm on Saturday with Irish dancers (maybe) thereafter. Last time, it was \$45.

There's a fee to get into the Coyote Point Park, but Fridays are free for seniors (62+) and it should be free if you say you're visiting the yacht club. Otherwise, the entrance fee is \$6. There may also be a \$6 launch fee at the ramp.

Those who are sailing the roughly 10 nm over to CPYC and back will meet at the [Redwood City Marina Boat Ramp](#) ([see map](#)) at 9:00 a.m. Saturday. You should expect a couple of knots of adverse current to CPYC. Launching costs \$5 and includes parking for the day. Buy two tickets to cover parking for two days. Remember to contact Potter Yachters on Channel 69.

RSVP for dinner at CPYC by March 10 to: commodore@potter-yachters.org




Right lane has automated payment machine and Left lane is probably only attended weekends

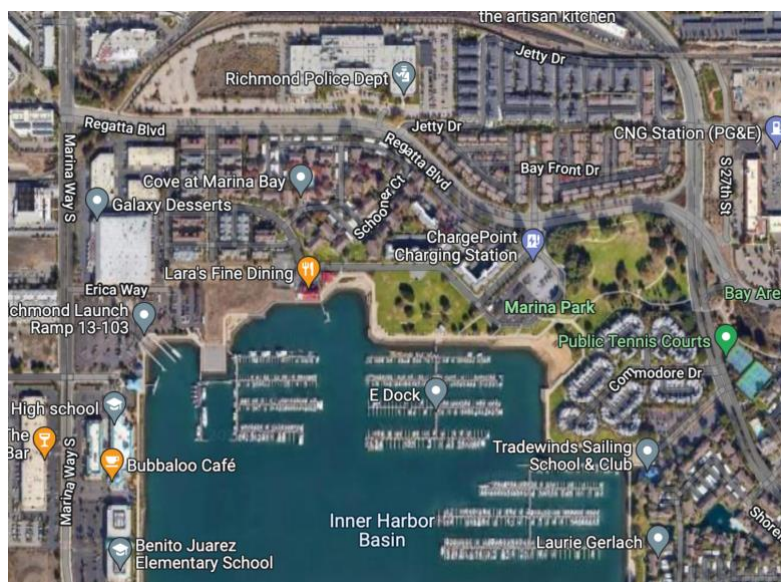
We generally sail out by the U.S.S. Thompson wreck to anchor for a quick lunch, but where we sail will depend on the wind and current. We'll discuss it at the 9 a.m. captains' meeting in Coyote Point. —

April Fools Sail! Richmond to Alameda March 31 to April 2.



Enjoy an April Fools sail to the Oakland Yacht Club. This trip leaves on Saturday morning at about 10 a.m. from the [Marina Bay Yacht Harbor](#) (MBYH) in Richmond sailing to the Oakland Yacht Club. Slips and parking are available at Marina Bay. Some folks will be launching on Friday and staying over at Marina Bay. To get a slip at Marina Bay contact the harbor master at 510-236-1013. They will want you to scan and send them proof of insurance and your boat registration. They will also want \$25 a night. They also want to know that you are part of a group reservation for the Potter Yachters.

This should be a great sail with views of Angel Island, the Golden Gate, Alcatraz, and Treasure Island. If conditions permit we will stop for lunch in Clipper Cove at Treasure Island. The [Oakland Yacht Club](#) is expecting us for Saturday night. Slips are \$30 for Saturday and the second night is free. Note that you will need a [registration form](#), that should be completed before arrival at the Yacht Club. You will also need to provide your proof of insurance and registration. Dinner will be available at the Yacht Club on Saturday night at 6 (bar opens at 5:30), and brunch will be available Sunday at 10. It should be a very pleasant trip. If you plan to have dinner or brunch RSVP to me at drzilbert@gmail.com. Hope to see you there! — 



Directions to Marina Bay (www.mbyh.com)

Cross street: Marina Way South and Hall Ave.

From Marin:

I-580E over the Richmond/San Rafael Bridge
(towards Richmond/Oakland)
Exit at Marina Bay Parkway
Turn Right onto Marina Bay Parkway
Turn Right onto Regatta Blvd.
Turn Left onto Marina Way South

From San Francisco/Oakland:

I-80 E/I-580 W
Take the Pt. Richmond/San Rafael Exit onto
I-580 W
Exit at Marina Bay Pkwy/S 23rd St
Turn Left onto Marina Bay Pkwy
Turn Right onto Regatta Blvd.
Turn Left onto Marina Way South

Have you had any good sailing adventures? Do you have any great cautionary tales? What is your favorite sailing spot? Have you done any cool repairs or modifications to your boat? Or maybe your trailer? Looking for contributions to the newsletter. [E-mail](#) the editor:

(Jerry Barrilleaux interview continued from page 1)

At age 75, Jerry stays close to home these days to care for his spouse, Carol, who recently underwent hip surgery. Yet both his sailboats stand ready, and circumstances permitting, he could grace a club outing or two in 2023. We hope so. In January, Jerry spoke by telephone with George Wehrfritz. Excerpts:



Photo credit: Don Person

Was boating important to your childhood? Oh yes. Dad was a Cajun, born and raised down in the bayou of Louisiana. Of course, when we moved up to Northern California he fell in love with the Delta, and so we spent a lot of time up there. He wasn't a sailor, but he had a little motorboat. We water skied. We built a canoe when I was about nine years old. He let me design it, and the first thing I did was put on a sail.

My first real sailboat was a little pram. Saved my money up and bought it, about 90 bucks back then. I was 14. I enjoyed that little boat for quite some time. In 1966, I think, they had a little boat show at the mall in Concord, and a West Wight Potter was there. I just fell in love with it but life got in the way.

How so? The war in Vietnam was hot and heavy. A lady friend in the Selective Service Board called me up, said "you'd better do something because your name is on the top to get drafted." I thought: *Oh God*. So, me and a good friend decided to see if we could get into some reserve unit. Spent two days going all over. Finally, we ended up in Alameda at a National Guard mechanics unit. The guy said "Sorry, but there's a great big waiting list." I said, "We're a

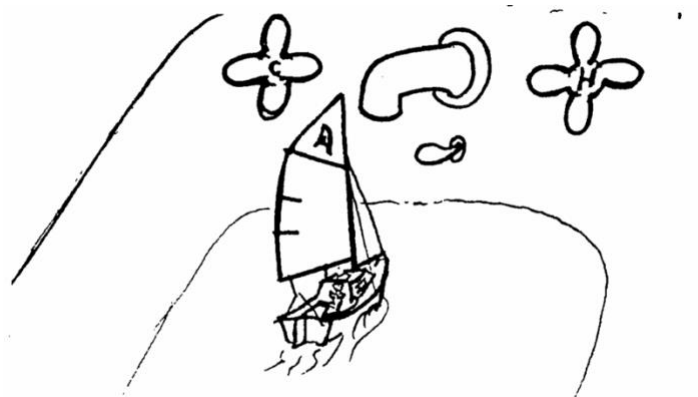
couple of mechanics." We were, like, 18. He said: "tell you what. I'll give you the test and see how you do." We both got 100%, so he swore us in right there and I joined the California National Guard and became a jeep and tank mechanic.

So, I finally got out, married, and you know, tried to raise a family. I still wanted a sailboat, so I got one of those little car-top Snarks. I'd take my dog out fishing in it, just having a good time. One day I ran into a couple with a Potter, and I knew what it was. By that time, they had an aluminum mast and more upgrades. I immediately went out and bought one.

In an email you described heading down to pick up your new boat. Tell that story. Well, I went down there, and it wasn't ready. My wife was staying with relatives, and I spent a few days at the factory and helped build my boat just for fun. Also, they were finishing a 12-foot Sparrow that Herb Stewart designed back in 1973. He pulled this little yellow Sparrow out of the mold and had about eight or nine coffee cans full of nuts and bolts from the scrap yard. A couple hundred pounds, and he just poured them right into the keel for ballast, then poured resin over that and put the liner in there and build the boat. Not a great idea.

Montgomery tried that on their 17s, which had a centerboard that slid down. Water would get down in there and rust the nuts and bolts, which would expand and press on that centerboard until it wouldn't go up and down anymore. You don't want to use steel like that for ballast.

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Jerry Barrilleaux cartoon—originally published in the Potter Newsletter in March 1981

What drew you to the Potter 14? It was salty. You could take it out in the bay, out in the ocean, even sleep on it. Just the perfect little boat, and probably the best investment I made in my life.

My boat's over fifty years old now. It's in the garage and looks like new. There's nothing wrong with it, and I've been sailing that thing hard for years out in San Francisco Bay. Nothing's ever broken, nothing's ever failed. It's a tough little boat.

When did you get *Sunshine*, your HMS-18? I went through a divorce and about the only thing I kept was my motorcycle and my Potter, which was fine. I had to start over. After about ten years I found a nice gal and we got married, and the first thing I did was take her sailing. We spend a day cruising around in the Delta on the little Potter and she loved it. City girl, never been in boats before. I thought boy, she might be a keeper. After a while I decided I'd start looking for a Catalina, but I did my homework. What's it going to cost me to actually own a bigger boat? A lot more than I'd thought.

Also, I kept a houseboat in a cheap moorage up by Stockton, and I was living out that way at the time. Had a lot of fun cruising on it, too. What happened was, a tornado ran through the Delta and destroyed this whole marina the houseboat happened to be at. And, you know how insurance policies go, they'll always insure you for stuff that'll never happen. Well, I had insurance for tornados in California, so it paid off nicely.

Seed money for the HMS 18! Yeah. I got the money and started looking. I measured the outside of my house and decided a Potter 19 could fit. I knew the boat's whole history. I knew most of the builders at International Marine, kept in touch with them all. Anyhow, the original HMS 18 was a well-built, well-rigged and super sturdy boat, but they quit making them in about 1976. When Herb sold the company to Joe Edwards, they were just making the little Potters. Then resin got more reasonable, and Joe decided to start building the bigger boat again, but he'd never built one. His P-19s were quite a bit lighter, and different. I wanted one and had the money, but by that time International Marine had been sold again to this fellow who had a motorcycle shop down the street, and he had this guy building the boats. He was a sailor and a good guy, but I wasn't happy with what I saw. They'd gone to a lighter mast, eliminated the backstay, which was real stupid because the shrouds weren't swept back far enough. I thought this was nuts.

Finally, I put the word out: if anybody finds a nice HMS 18 let me know. Somebody did up in Chico, and it was cheap. Everything was a mess, and it took me about three months to get things squared away. I've been sailing her [*Sunshine*, HMS 18 #48] since 1995. Wonderful little boat.

In the early newsletters you propose rudder mods for the P-14s and detail how to maximize windward performance. Later you design a backstay for the P18/19s ... I was out sailing *Sunshine* with a friend who had a brand-new Potter 19. I was way out pointing him, outrunning him. When I got into his boat, I noticed that the mast would pump quite a bit, especially out in the bay with the chop. The jib would sag, and it just wasn't performing well. So, I took some measurements and put a backstay on it for him. Then he could match my boat. People asked, so I started building the kits. Sold a hundred or so, maybe more.

One time at work one of the engineers says, "Hey Jerry, what material are you using for that backstay kit?" So, I told him it was aluminum plate and what size. He says: "You know, these guys dropped a bunch of it off at the loading dock, but we didn't order it. And when we called, they told us 'Just keep it' because it was cheaper to them than coming back." He says "You want it? Make it disappear." So I cut it all up, took it home and had material for all of these things. I gave people a good deal and actually supplied the factory with them.

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Trading tacks with Jerry B on the delta.
Photo credit: Don Person



Jerry's lack of enthusiasm for the St. Francis Yacht Club has been legendary. This cartoon was originally published in the April 1981 Potter Yachter newsletter.

The club's inaugural newsletter (April 1978) references you as a contact person for members interested the joining the Potter Nationals down in Marina Del Ray. Along with your various Potter mods, it suggests an abiding interested in sailing fast. Pretty much. You know, I'd been sailing for a couple years out in the bay but had no idea how good I was doing. Had nothing to compare it to. I just kept playing with sail trim. I read everything Stanley Smith wrote about the boat and went from there. The little Potter is designed to carry a whole lot of gear up in the front, okay, so I took a bunch of lead, heated it up and made a V piece to fit the forepeak under the anchor locker. I put the anchor on top of it, which got the transom up just enough. All of a sudden, the little sucker took off.

In fact, we went to the Potter Nationals one time up at Lake Isabella. About 30 boats showed up for this race, and Herb Stewart looks at the lineup on the dock and says, "Who owns that boat right there? It's sitting in the water just right." It was mine, and I won the race.

A gap in the newsletter archive thwarted our efforts to tally the number of races you've won. The count begins in 1980 and ends, so far, in 2015, when you joined Ken Lange in a Voyager 20 to claim the big boat category in Monterey that year. My Potter 14 is still pretty much stock except for the MK II mainsail. It came with 3/32 shrouds. After sailing for a long time, I went ahead and changed that over to 1/8 inch, not that it needed it, cause when I took it all apart the originals were fine. (Continued next page)

I'm running a plywood rudder Herb Stewart sent me. He said, "Put this on your boat and it will perform better." I've used it forever. I haven't been sailing my little boat much lately because my son kind of took it over.

I'd gotten so consistent racing it that I quit for a couple years, figuring *well, let somebody else do this*. One year that I wasn't racing this lawyer shows up, had a stripped-down P-15 just gutted out. He tore it up and made everyone else look bad. Meanwhile, I'd been up at a lake with my son, who was 11 at the time. He was a really good little sailor, wanted to learn how to sail *Breezy*, my P-14. I took him out and he got it real quick, so I told him: "We got the Nationals coming up in Oakland and I'll let you race the boat if you want to, and I'll go along as a tactician and a beer-drinker." He says "Deal." So, we pull in to the Encinal Yacht Club and everyone was "Thank God you're here! We need somebody to show this lawyer..." I said: "Hate to disappoint you but my son is going to sail. I promised him I'm not touching anything."

Anyhow, this lawyer was good. First race we got him by a boat length. In all, we beat him three out of three that day, by more and more each time. During the last race I told my son "Damn it, I ran out of beer." He says: "Hey Dad, let's slide up by the Salty Dog and you can run up and grab a six-pack. We still got time to win this race." That's a true story.

My son has never lost a race with that little boat. It has no bells and whistles, nothing fancy on it, because at that time I was low on money and had to raise a family. I just couldn't afford anything. I wanted a boom vang, so I just made one. In fact, I picked up my engine for \$25 in a box all full of parts. I used that for 16 years.

Seems you've passed on the sailing bug. We have four kids. The one that's the real sailor is my youngest son, Todd. He's a chief in the navy right now. It's so much fun to sail with him because we don't even have to communicate. He knows exactly what to do and when to do it. We were in one of the Cruiser Challenges, him and his daughter were sailing with me, so we had three in *Sunshine*, and it was so much fun. Not only did we win our class, but we beat the big boats. There was a guy who had a Catalina 22 Sport, and we just went after him and finally beat him. Just for fun. (Continued next page)

Writing about the 2002 Cruiser Challenge in Monterey, Judy Blumhorst described a long tacking-dual between three boats vying for the lead: Bob Campbell's Montgomery 15 crewed by Jerry Montgomery, Judy's P-19, and your P-19, crewed by your wife. She writes:

"...We could see Jerry and Bob hiking out, climbing around the boat, trimming the winches, really working the boat.... They made quite a contrast to what was going on just behind us, where we could see Jerry and Carol Barrilleaux sitting calmly, drinking wine (?)"

Sailing fast, chilling out and drinking Chardonnay? Well, normally I don't drink wine in a race, but I may have.

Trailer-sailing's waning popularity is a recurring dockside lament. Is affordability a factor? Are people being priced out of boating? Not at all. You can pick up a used boat for, sometimes nothing. There are all kinds of them out there. Back in the '70s you could wait in line at a launch ramp with five or six people in front of you. Now, there's nobody unless it's a club meet or something.

One problem is that trailer-sailing requires a tow vehicle, and cars these days aren't designed to pull boats. A little Potter 15 or a Guppy 13, something like that maybe.

Phil, our current commodore, described you as the guy who was always there to help with engine repair or do magic tricks to entertain the kids. Yeah, I'm a magician and a mechanic. I've played with outboards my whole life. I used to build racing engines for boats. Sailing has always been my passion. If somebody's got a problem or something, I'd like to help.

Another recurring topic is safety. Early newsletters reference capsizes, a lawsuit, people who died. [We lost one of the guys as soon as the club started.](#) I guess he was a member, but I'd never met him. He was famous for doing long hauls up the coast with his Potter 14. They found the boat washed up at Devil's Slide, and eventually they found him. That is the only person I remember who actually died. He was by himself, and that was his thing. There was another fellow who flipped one over out in San Francisco Bay in the slot with his girlfriend onboard. He wasn't a club member, but I heard about him. We've had a couple people that turned one over—usually human error. They're really hard to capsize, but you can do it.



Potters motoring through the Mokelumne River Bridge. Jerry, on *Sunshine*, is 2nd from the left. Photo credit: Don Person

Nowadays, new sailors can read about how best to configure their boats for sailing in San Francisco Bay, much of it written by Potter Yachters. Oh yeah. We tried to keep everybody safe. But back in the day, I didn't even have reef points. I would sail San Francisco Bay in 25 knots and just do the fisherman's reef to get me home. I would launch in Oakland, sail over to Tiberon for a slice of pizza, and come back in that little boat, just having fun. I didn't know it was crazy at the time, but I guess it was.

One time, maybe twenty years ago, I was in Oakland with a friend who had a new Potter, helping him get it going at the launching ramp. This guy comes

over, a fellow from the Chicago area out on a business trip in a rental car. Saw the Potter so he stopped. I introduced myself and he says: "You're Jerry Barrilleaux?" I said "Yeah," and the guy gives me a big hug. He says, "You saved my life." Apparently, he was out sailing and got into trouble, and based on something I wrote way back when, he did whatever I'd advised him to do and it saved him.

(Continued next page)

Something else appears in the newsletters in 1979. A place you introduced to the club called Lost Isle with 75-cent Mai-Tais. Oh yeah. That was quite the place, an island up in the Delta that used to be called Acre Island. Back in the 1930s it was a gambling joint and apparently had a bordello. In the '70s you'd pull into Lost Isle, and it was like going to Tahiti or something. This big old thatched roof thing, the bar had a slant to it, and they had Mai Tais on tap. There were monkeys running around and they'd get into your boat and steal things. It was wild.


Sounds like a tornado in the Delta every weekend. One time, I took a bunch of guys from work on my houseboat, and we were having a party. We went to Lost Isle, having fun with the Mai-Tais and whatnot, and as we're pulling out, we pass one of those houseboats with a glassed-in back end and a couple's there having sex. All my buddies rushed to one side of the boat to get a look-see and we damn near capsized that houseboat. It got real crazy.



Jerry wowing the younger generation performing a card trick at the Napa Valley Marina. Photo credit: Goose Gossman

What are your favorite sailing grounds? If you've got a family and just want to go out to have a good time and camp, Woodward Reservoir tops my list. It's really nice. A bunch of jet skis took over for a while, but it's calmed down now. When my kids were little, we used to go and have a blast sitting around the campfire. It's a wonderful place to sail, too. Perfect sailing lake. If I want to sail San Francisco Bay, I go out of Richmond. Nice launch ramp. Secure. A beautiful 5-mile sail out to Angel Island. You don't have to cross The Slot like you would going to Oakland, which can blow really nasty especially in summertime.

I would organize these sails, do a lot of scouting on my motorcycle or take the boat out looking. When I found places that worked, I'd write them up and the club would sail there. Some don't exist anymore. There are different ways to sail San Francisco Bay and stay safe. We did one recently out of Benicia, sailed all the way to Napa and never had to crank my motor. Beautiful sail.

You contributed some wonderful cartoons in the early newsletters. It's another hobby of mine, I have a lot of hobbies. I'm a magician and a ventriloquist. I'm into old cars and model airplanes. I'm a member of a clown club, of all things, and I ran a flea circus at Playland for eight years. Basically, I'm an entertainer. — 

Officer's Club

Commodore:
Phil Marcelis
Catalina 22, *Merri Time*

P-15 Fleet Captain:
Bud Kerner
P-14,

Secretary/Treasurer:
Jim "Goose" Gossman
P-19 *Regale*

Vice-Commodore:
Jon Barber
Montgomery 17, *Ol' 44*

P-19 Fleet Captain:
Eric Zilbert
P-19, #629, *Riptide*

Website:
www.potter-yachters.org

Newsletter Editor:
Sharon Soule'
Balboa 21, *Nighthawk*

Webmaster:
Phil Marcelis

Facebook:
[PotterYachters](https://www.facebook.com/PotterYachters)



'Goose' Gossman
865 West I Street
Benicia, CA 94510

With a Grain of Salt

The **Potter Yachter** is a forum for exchange of ideas and information among West Wight Potter (and other mini-yacht) sailors. But we Potter Yachters are mostly a bunch of amateurs finding our way by trial and error and luck.

You will probably find some very helpful tips or ideas in the **Potter Yachter** that will enhance your sailing experience, but you may also find some ill-advised suggestions or ideas that just don't work for your particular boat, your sailing environment, your level of sailing experience, or your boat-working skills. So please understand that any sailing tutorials, suggested boat modifications, recommended cruises, etc., are the opinion of the author, based presumably on his or her personal experience and judgment at the time the article or letter was written.

If a Potter Yachter believes s/he has a good idea and submits it to the newsletter for publication, we will usually pass it on to the rest of you in the newsletter, but take it "with a grain of salt" and a large portion of your own good judgment, and perhaps get a second opinion before undertaking a modification or cruise or sailing technique you read about in the **Potter Yachter** (or any other publication).

- The Editor

