



OAR POWER AND SAIL

A brief history of
The Vallejo Yacht Club 1900-1987

By: C. Thomas Hosley
VYC Historian



Introduction:

As the fifth oldest yacht club in the San Francisco Bay area, the Vallejo Yacht Club has a long history of yachting, which fortunately has been better preserved than most. Thanks to the efforts of members of the VYC History committee and many club members who have contributed artifacts, photographs and other information which served as the resource material for this brief history as well as a slide show produced in 1987. This history originally was published in *The Solano Historian*.

About the Author:

Dr. C. Thomas Hosley has been a member of the Vallejo Yacht Club since 1969. He served as Commodore in 1977. As Vice Commodore in 1976, he organized the history committee and is currently serving as Club Historian.



Oar, Power and Sail - A Brief History of the Vallejo Yacht Club

by C. Thomas Hosley

The Vallejo Yacht club has been a landmark in Vallejo and for yachtsmen of San Francisco Bay since the turn of the century. The Vallejo Yachting and Rowing Club was permanently organized at a meeting of fifty interested boaters which was held at the Labor Bureau Hall in Vallejo on April 27, 1900. A preliminary meeting had been held on April 11 at the Hook and Ladder House. William J. Wood, a master sailmaker at Mare Island Shipyard, was elected commodore; Adrien Eugene Chapman, manager of the Turner Shipyard and son-in-law of Captain Matthew Turner, vice commodore; M.H. Peck, recording secretary; Frank Dexter, financial secretary; Matthew Turner, measurer; James Lynn, port captain; T.V. Collins, treasurer. The board of directors was Guy Shirley, Jules Elmquest, Frank Fitzmaurice, William Kirkland, and George Warford.

The new club selected a site off the Virginia Street pier and started the construction of the clubhouse in 1901. All of the work was through volunteer labor by the club members. Architect Carl Siebrand, who had previously designed the Seattle Yacht Club's home, drew up the plans. Construction was under the direction of George Warford, carpenter in the U.S. Navy, with overall supervision by Commodore

Wood. Funds were raised by selling stock in the club at five dollars per share. As a further inducement, volunteers were granted one share for each ten hours of labor performed in erection of the building. Most of the stock credit issued went toward credit for dues.

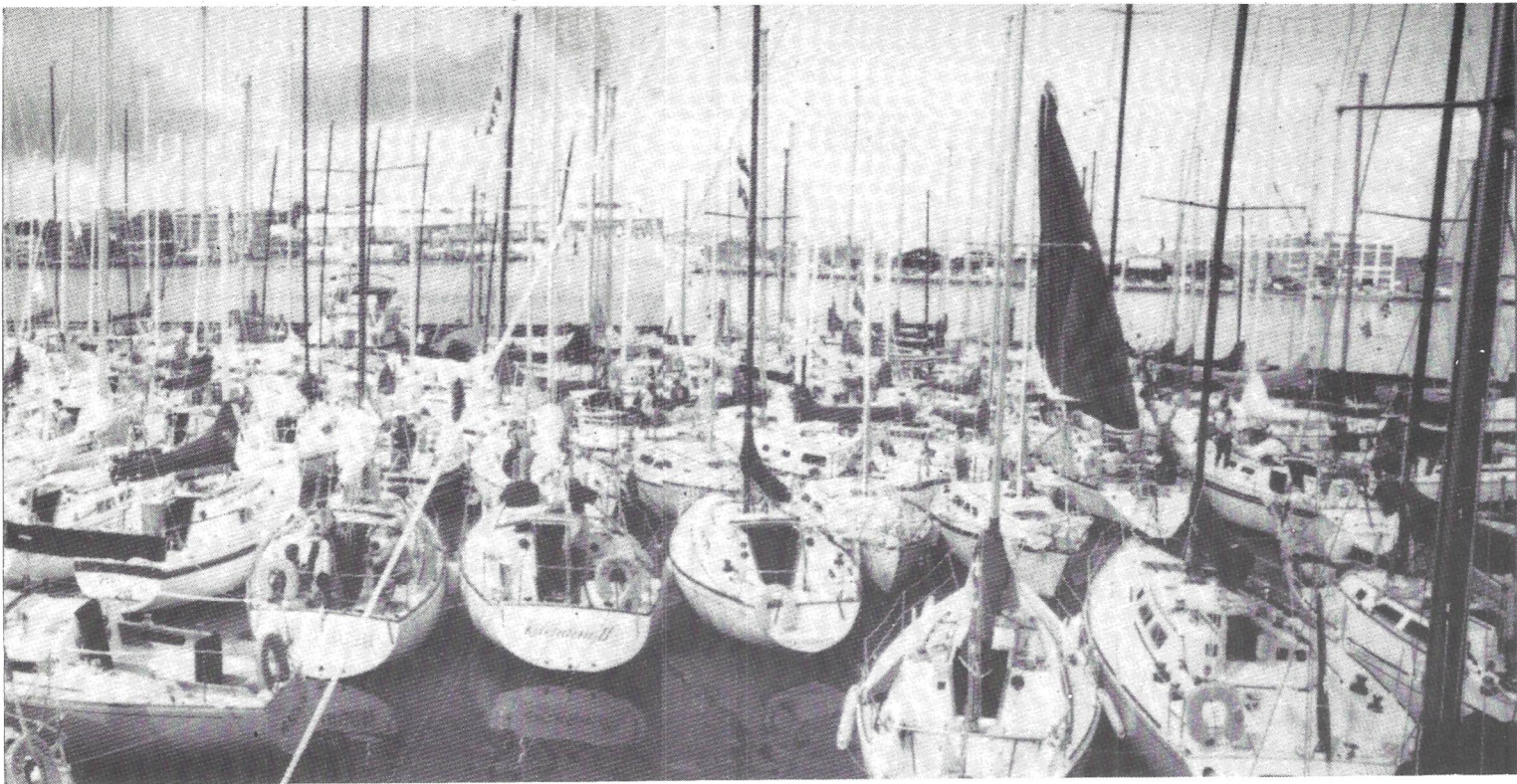
R.A. Perry, superintendent of the Atlantic Gulf Construction Company, provided the piles, equipment and manpower to drive the piles to support the clubhouse. Perry was granted an honorary life membership for his contribution. The club construction was far enough along by April of 1901 to allow the club to invite the Corinthian Yacht Club of San Francisco and entertain them in great style with a luncheon, music and fireworks. On May 17, 1902, the San Francisco, Corinthian and California Yacht Clubs cruised to Vallejo in honor of the opening of the new Vallejo Yachting and Rowing Clubhouse.

The name, Vallejo Yachting and Rowing Club, reflects the interest in both yachting and rowing that goes back to the 1850s. Sailing and rowing contests were often held between the crews of ships in the Bay. Of course, boats of all types plied the waters of the Bay and the Sacramento River as these waters served as a major highway to the gold fields. Benicia was a major stopping place as was Vallejo.

Organized yachting commenced on San Francisco Bay with the formation of the San Francisco Yacht Club in 1869, only twenty-five years after the oldest U.S.A. club, the New York Yacht Club was formed. By 1896 when the Pacific Inter-Club Yachting Association was formed, only six yacht clubs were listed. They were Corinthian, Encinal, South Bay (Alviso), San Francisco, and two others, Pacific and California which no longer exist. Today, in 1987, the Vallejo Yacht Club is the fifth oldest club of the eighty-five clubs in northern California. There are currently four other yacht clubs in Solano County; Dixon Boat and Fishing Club (1949), Delta Marina Yacht Club, Rio Vista (1964), Solano Yacht Club, Suisun (1955), and Benicia Yacht Club (1977). In addition, there is a Benicia Sailing Club.

These early Bay Area clubs cruised to Vallejo, Napa, Martinez, Petaluma, and other areas during the 1880s and 90s. One Fourth-of-July cruise in the 1890s featured a race to Mare Island with the faster boats waiting for the slower boats to catch up. Then they raced up Napa Creek where a picnic, races, fireworks, and a dance were held.

Competitive rowing was a popular sport in the 1870s and 80s in two, four and six-oared sculls and gigs. Vallejo had three very active rowing clubs.



Vallejo Yacht Club harbor at time of YRA-Vallejo Race, May 3, 1986.

They were the Alert Boat Club, organized in 1872, the Excelsior Boat Club and the Farragut Boat Club of South Vallejo. The "Champion Colors" banner won by the Alert Club in 1874 hangs on the wall of the Vallejo Yacht Club. A fine example of a two-oared scull is the "Flirt," built in 1886 by W.A. Jones. The "Flirt" also hangs in the present clubhouse.

Many Mare Island workers used boats to cross the channel from Vallejo to Mare Island as an alternative to paying the ferry fare since there was no causeway to the Island. Races naturally resulted between the rowers which helped to develop the interest in recreational rowing. Tricks such as tying a rope to the dock with the other end nailed to the keel of a rival's boat were not unheard of. The sudden stop when the line drew taut no doubt was a moment of great merriment or consternation depending upon which boat one occupied.

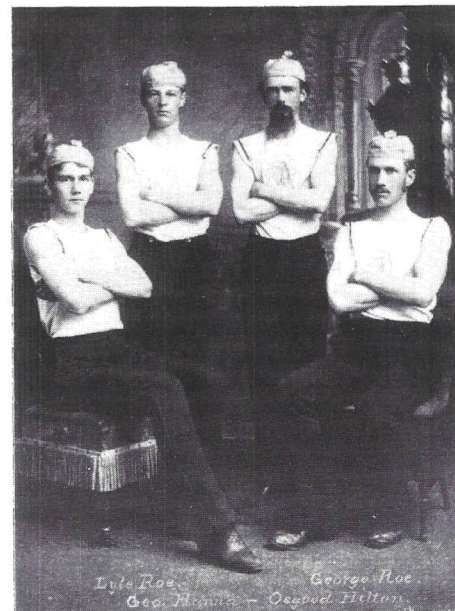
Competitive rowing in whaleboats between crews of naval ships at Mare Island was sometimes sponsored by the City of Vallejo. A cup for such a race was won by the crew of the armored cruiser "California" (later renamed the "San Diego") which was sunk off Long Island in 1918. The cup was retrieved by a diver in 1984. Rowing continued to be popular during the first decade of the twentieth century with Vallejo Yacht-

ing and Rowing Club members participation.

In the late 1890s and early 1900s the development of the gas and naphtha engines for small boats greatly expanded the range and flexibility of small boat recreational cruising and racing. Cruises to Vallejo, Napa and the Delta towns were popular. Cruises to the Vallejo Yachting and Rowing club both by sail and power became regularly scheduled events of the San Francisco yachting clubs, some of which scheduled as many as four cruises per year to Vallejo. These soon evolved into two-day affairs with cruises to Vallejo and sailboat races back to their home ports. PICYA eventually started coordinating the scheduling of racing and cruising schedules for all of the member clubs and published the schedules in Yachting Yearbook starting in 1924. The cruise to Vallejo and the race back home on the following day were soon firmly established as the first events of the yachting year. This tradition is still followed today with the two-day Vallejo Race as the season opener for all YRA (Yacht Racing Association) racers.

Among the early members of the yacht club, several stand out for their leadership and long service. A.E. Chapman was the first vice commodore in 1900 and served as commodore from

1901 to April of 1906 when he suddenly died from a burst appendix. As Captain Turner's son-in-law and shipyard manager he had been engaged in the building of yachts in Turner's shipyard. Turner's sailboat, "Gadder", had won the San Francisco Perpetual



This rowing team of the Alert Rowing Club defeated the Farraguts on Nov. 28, 1878. Left to right - Lyle Roe, George Hanna, Osgood Hilton.

Trophy in 1899 and lost the race in 1900. Chapman built "Helen" in 1901 and raced her in the San Francisco Perpetual Trophy Race of that year but lost to Lester Stone's "Presto." Both boats raced under the colors of the San Francisco Yacht Club but were listed under the Vallejo banner after 1901.

John P. Scully was a charter member who remained active until his death at age eighty. He was a Vallejo policeman. Scully became the financial secretary of the club in 1901 when Chester Shade was killed in an automobile accident. Scully served in this office until 1924 except for two years (1907-08) when he was commodore. He was also a photographer who carefully labeled his photos. Many of the valuable photographs of the first forty years of the club history were either taken by or identified by "Jack" Scully. He bought "Helen" after Chapman's death and she served as the club's flagship in 1907 and 1908.

Judge John A. Browne joined the club as an honorary member in 1901 and became a regular member in April 1902. He served as vice commodore from 1904 through 1906 taking over as active commodore in 1906 upon the death of Chapman. He also served as commodore in 1924. In 1903 he became club secretary and held that office, when he wasn't commodore or vice-commodore, until 1925. His careful recordings of membership lists, officer rolls and minutes written in his beautiful Spencerian handwriting have given us most of the early history of the Vallejo Yacht Club.

Many prominent Vallejo citizens were members of the club at one time or other. Perhaps the most famous member of all was Jack London, who joined the club in 1910. He remained a frequent visitor until his death. It has been said that he outfitted his boat



VYC's 1903 crew of D. O'Shea, John Corbett, Ed Lynch, Wm. Maher, J.S. Watson, and A. Morest rowed the six-oared Gig #2.

"Roamer" at the Vallejo Yachting and Rowing Club docks. He loved to play cards with George Hilton and other members of the club. Other long term early members were William Kirkland, who was the first recording secretary and served as measurer from 1903 to 1937, Captain Matthew Turner, who served as measurer from 1900 to 1902 and who also contributed the first flagpole for the new clubhouse, S.J. McKnight, a local banker who served as treasurer from 1902 to 1941, and Judge Frank Devlin, who served on the board of directors in 1901 and was largely responsible for developing the club's first by-laws.

During the eighty-seven years the club has been in existence sixty-four men have served as commodore. One member served as short as three months while A.E. Chapman's five and a quarter years was the longest term. For long term service to the club and leadership no one has come close to the record set by Clarence "Red" Fox. In 1987 he was honored as being the most

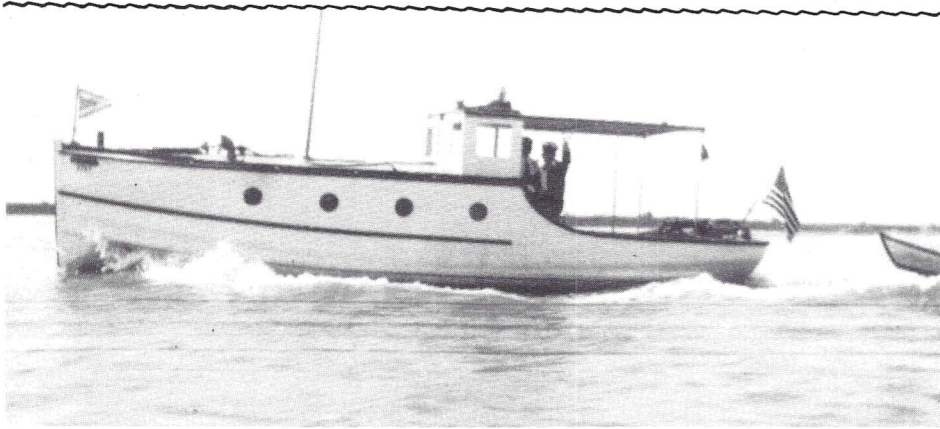
senior of all the past commodores of any yacht club on the west coast having first served as commodore sixty-five years ago in 1922. He joined in 1920 as a junior member at age twenty and two years later was elected as the youngest commodore in the history of the club. He served as commodore four times and held other offices. He was active until the 1970s. He was involved in building the ways and docks and helped supervise some of the work on the new clubhouse. Other longtime members are "Shorty" Yuravich who joined in 1922, Joe Schlosser in 1935 and LeRoy Taylor in 1935, all with over fifty years of service to the club.

Membership was limited to men as was common in yacht clubs until quite recently. Early house rules stated that ladies couldn't come into the club house unless accompanied by a member. However, ladies played an active role in the social affairs and cruises.

Prospective members were voted upon by using the "black-ball" method. A wooden box with two



VYC's 1903 crew of (left to right) J.P. Scully, J.A. Sancts, W.J. Corbett, and George Warford rowed the four-oared shell.



"Francis F" was built by Red Fox at the VYC Clubhouse in 1926-27.

chambers was designed for this purpose. A member reached into the open section and selected either a white or a black marble and slipped his choice into the secret covered section of the box. If, upon opening the covered section of the box, three or more black marbles appeared, the member was rejected, or "blackballed." The original box used for voting in this manner is in the collection of club artifacts. Election by majority vote of the members was finally adopted in July 1966 when the by-laws were changed largely over the issue of membership of Horace MacKerrow. He had been blackballed four times, although he was granted honorary membership in 1968. In the vote after the by-laws change, he became the first black member of the club and six years later was elected commodore. A junior membership category was established as early as 1909 with half-rate dues to encourage young people to participate in yachting. Honorary and life memberships were granted usually for special service or long service. Life membership is now granted to members with thirty-five years of membership or by board action for meritorious service.

Women were first recognized for membership in 1971 when female owners of yachts received "flag member" status for as long as they owned their boats. Widows of former life members could be "Feminine Associate Members." Finally, in 1975 in proposals by Tom Hosley and Wyman Riley these special categories were dropped to eliminate any discrimination as to race or sex. The by-laws were changed to allow women as regular members. Christy Huddle, a city planner for the City of Vallejo, became the first female regular member in 1976. In 1983 Carolyn Campbell was elected to the board of directors. Susan Lane was the first woman "Fleet Captain Sail" in 1976 and a member of the board of directors in 1987.

Until 1957, the ladies had no formal

status. In July 1957 the by-laws were changed to authorize a Ladies Auxiliary. The first president was Edna Brinkman. The Auxiliary was very active in the social affairs of the club with major responsibilities for the Christmas, Easter and Halloween parties as well as fashion shows and other activities. As one of its projects in

August 1976 it produced a cookbook titled "Down to the Sea in Pots." It was a popular item which sold for \$3.50. The Auxiliary membership dropped off in the late 1970s. A separate category for women was no longer needed when the "family membership was adopted in 1981. Married couples could be members with one-half vote each if they selected the family membership option. Much of the work formerly done by the Ladies Auxiliary is now done by committees of men and women participating together.

As a legal basis for operation, the Vallejo Yachting and Rowing Club was incorporated on March 7, 1902. The stated purposes were: "(1) complete the partly finished clubhouse; (2) promote interest in yachting, rowing and all aquatic sports; (3) hold and give regattas, meets and competitions of other characters, and to give prizes and awards and other inducements for same; (4) collect fees, dues, and other charges from members and others; (5) to do or cause to be done any other act or covenant for conducting or promot-



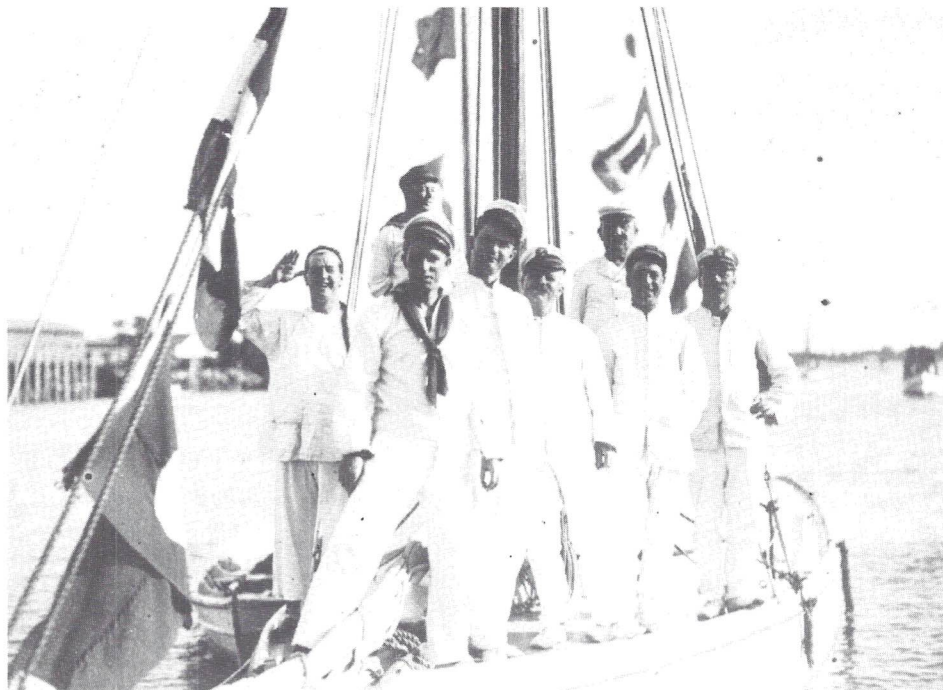
"Helen" was built by Chapman in 1901 at Turner Shipyard. Purchased by J.P. Scully in 1906, she served as the VYC flagship in 1907-08.

ing any of the objects or purposes mentioned above." "The term of existence shall be fifty years. Looking back over the past eighty-seven years that the club has been in existence these purposes have certainly been met. The club was incorporated as a capital stock corporation with \$5,000 @ \$1.00 per share. The amount of stock actually subscribed to and listed as an attachment to the incorporation documents was \$736.06 with the names of the fifty-four subscribers listed along with the amount of each subscription which varied from \$5 to \$50. Stock was sold to the members for building the clubhouse and harbor improvements. On November 15, 1936, new Articles of Incorporation were filed making the club a non-profit organization. The name was changed to Vallejo Yacht Club at that time.

Financial support for the Vallejo Yacht Club for many years was meager in terms of cash income. A summary prepared by longtime Treasurer S. J. McKnight titled "Statement of Receipts and Disbursements" showed total receipts of \$644.50 and disbursements of \$591.46 in 1902. The total receipts averaged approximately \$1400 per year until 1916-1918 (World War I) when they dropped to a low of \$735.10 in 1917. After the war they gradually increased to about \$2400 until the early depression years again reduced the income to under \$2000 per year until 1935. Again they rose to \$3860.21 in 1939. The total income for this thirty-seven year period was \$64,374.99 with total disbursements of \$64,283.73. Compare those figures with the current 1987 budget with revenues of \$221,310, expenditures of \$181,115 and reserves of \$40,195.

The dues were \$1.00 per month for many years with initiation fees of \$5.00 which were raised to \$10.00 in 1927. A ten per cent federal excise tax on dues and initiation fees was assessed in 1923 although the club was unaware of this until 1927 when they had to pay \$396.08 in back taxes. In May 1956 the law changed to exempt such clubs from the 25 per cent excise tax if dues and fees did not exceed \$10. Fees for capital improvements were exempt. In order to avoid the excise tax the dues structure was changed so that the \$27.00 yearly dues were divided into \$10 for dues and \$17 for capital improvement. The excise tax was no longer a factor in 1963 when non-profit organizations became exempt.

Volunteer labor by club members in every endeavor from construction of the buildings and harbor fund raisers to food service and social events had been the major factor in keeping the operating costs down while at the same time providing the opportunity for



"Helen" cruised to Sacramento in August 1906 with (left to right) Frank Lee, Walter Pierce, John Beard, Judge J.A. Browne, Charles Frebel, M. McNamara, and Jack Scully.

members to be a real part of the club. Until food service was contracted for in 1976 and a club manager employed, the only regular labor costs were for a club steward and for bartending. Funds for capital improvements were raised as needed by selling stock or notes and by a bank loan when the new clubhouse was built.

Club management and operation of the Vallejo Yacht Club were conducted solely by the club officers and board of directors. The commodore was the administrative head and chairman of the board in charge of all of the club activities. Fortunately the affairs of the club were most often in good hands largely thanks to the services of the numerous officers who served faithfully over long periods of time thus bringing continuity to the operation. In 1967 a third flag officer was added, that of rear commodore. Herbert Philips was the first rear commodore. By 1971 growth and complexity of the club's operation made further division of responsibilities essential. The by-laws were changed making the commodore responsible for the social and boating activities of the club including the clubhouse maintenance. The chairman of the board of directors was elected from among the board members and the chairman became the administrative head. In 1978, the immediate past commodore became staff commodore and was a voting member of the board. Tom Hosley was the first staff commodore.

During the 1960s and up to 1976, much of the fund raising and operations for social affairs fell to the house committee chairman who had to make

arrangements for the food, dance bands, ticket sales, cooks, and volunteer help. Bill Hanley, commodore in 1970, carried the responsibilities as house committee chairman often along with dual duties as port captain and treasurer. On December 16, 1976, Shirley Burns became the first paid manager of the club, thus providing much needed daily operation responsibilities and services required by a business with a budget of \$116,000 per year. Shirley remained as manager for ten years, except for two breaks, and was replaced by Barbara Chandler in 1987.

Food service for the banquets, parties and other social events was traditionally provided by volunteer cooks and member helpers. Some were quite elaborate affairs. An early example was the menu printed on the commodore's "Order of the Day" celebrating the opening day of the yachting season on April 20, 1913. The following items were listed:

RATIONS CARD

"SUDS" Oakum Salad, Turk's Head Knot with Marine Dressing, Poulet des Goats Island Herbes.

"PAINT" Roast Tule Shoat a la San Joaquin, Pomes, Lanyard, Gastro-omme, Froides Float Tar.

"BUBBLE" Glaces la Mare Island, Croustades de Hard Tack, Cafe Black Leg, "Waterfront Dreams."

Noted cooks during the years include Toney Smith, Frank Algeo, Carmen Batchelor, Bill Hanley, Ike and Alice Eichner, and Bill Jensen.

After the formation of the Ladies Auxiliary in 1957, this group of hard

The financial report of 1944 shows the club had \$8,000 in War Bonds and \$27.50 in War Stamps on hand. The 1944 Yachting Yearbook listed eighteen VYC members who were enrolled in the armed services. Of those listed, Joe Schlosser, Arthur Krause and LeRoy Taylor are still members of the Yacht Club.

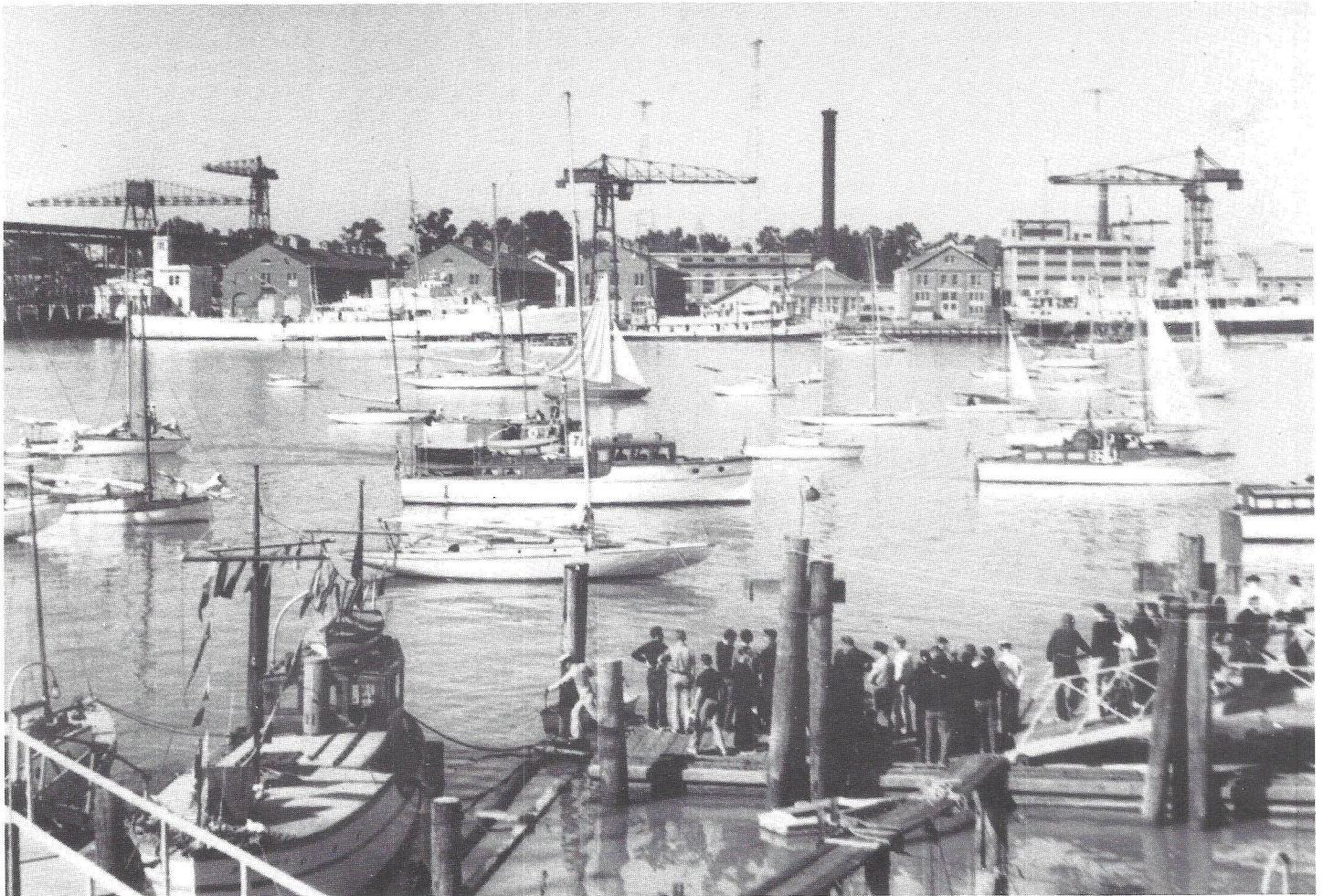
A new permanent enclosed harbor was the most pressing need after World War II. Since the building of the club in 1901-02 there had been a continuous but losing battle to provide adequate docking facilities for the club boats. The Mare Island Channel continually silted in and was not dredged on the Vallejo side. With only six registered yachts in the club by 1906 it was not a great problem initially but as the fleet grew and the water around the clubhouse became more shallow, the necessity for docks became more pressing. In 1906 Captain Francis B. Smith and his men provided the pile driver gratis to build the first wharf. For this service he was granted an honorary life membership in the club. New floats were added from time

to time. By the mid-thirties walkways with floating fingers were built both to the north and the south of the clubhouse. There were twenty-four "outside stalls" and eight to ten "inside stalls" available. Silting up of the berths was a constant problem. At low tide most of the boats sat in the mud completely out of the water.

Records of 1940 show that Ed Lippstreu was paid \$650 for outside dredging. A bid by A. S. Dutra for \$3,000 to dredge an area of 150 x 500 ft. was never acted upon. In 1949, Commodore O.B. Earle arranged to have forty temporary berths constructed in deep water north of the present clubhouse. These berths were connected to the clubhouse by a long walkway.

Finally in 1952, under the direction of Commodore Arthur Krause, construction was started on the present harbor. Club members used the machine shop at Vallejo High School to fabricate the parts for a suction dredge and they purchased an old pile driver from L.R. Iford for one dollar. Teams of volunteers each worked one weekend per month to complete the

dredging and to drive the piles. The dredge and pile driver were often patched back together. The equipment was sold to Bill Bird in 1964 for \$1,000. Bird became the commodore of VYC in 1982. The new harbor continued to silt in as there was no seawall yet built to keep the mud out. Ed O'Brien, captain of the "M. S. Mudhen" (dredger) dredged out the mud "and everything else thrown in for the last fifty year". Tony and Manual Silveria along with Angelo Rega were in charge of the construction of the bulkheads according to the article in the first issue of the "Binnacle" in January 1956. By April the forty temporary berths constructed in 1949 were moved into the new harbor and the task of hooking up the water and electricity began. The seawall bulkhead was finally finished in December 1956. A covered berth project was undertaken in 1957 with the pile driving by Paul Streichan, Dr. Jack Lazarus, and Herman and J. R. Brinkman. In July 1956 the ownership of the covered berths became a heated issue as to the legality of the



View from Vallejo Yacht Club on Opening Day, May 1, 1937.

covered berth association formed in 1957. The issue still is not settled today. The covered berths are owned by individual members who pay the club a reduced rate. Dr. George Halterman obtained permission to have individual members build berths at their own expense on what is now "D" row. They received a \$5.00 per month reduction in rent. The 82 berths available in 1968 were increased by extending "B" and "C" rows and adding a new "E" row at the north end of the harbor. Much of this work was done by the old faithful volunteers, Red Fox, Ed Grafton, Art Campbell, Ray Warren, Bill Hanley, Antone Nachbaur, Tony Silveria, and others. The sizes of the new berths were 30 feet or more in length and made wider to accommodate the growing number of larger sailboats. It is interesting to note the changes in the fleet through the years. Until the post World War II period, the sailing fleet was small with only eleven listed in 1944 while the motor boat fleet was forty-six strong. The next year showed a count of 25 sailboats and 35 motorboats. By 1975 the fleet numbered 175 with an even split between motor and sailboats. Currently, in 1987, sailboats outnumber powerboats 141 to 72. There is a waiting list for the larger berths.

Another massive dredging project was completed in 1977 during which all of the berths and headwalks had to be moved and most of the boats were temporarily berthed at the Vallejo Municipal Marina. Port Captain Bob Hull and Jay Baron with Board Chairman Horace MacKerrow overseeing the project completed the massive job in record time. Additional dredging was done in 1982. The sea wall bulkhead was repaired in 1980. The current two to three year project to replace and/or repair all of the berths and walkways was begun in 1986 with Vern Coburn, Don Searle, and Art Campbell heading up the crews of volunteers.

Cruising has long been a popular boating activity. Individuals cruise up to the Delta, "downbay" to San Francisco destinations with the more venturesome heading out the "Gate" for coastal and ocean cruises to far away ports. Organized club cruises from other yacht clubs have been hosted by Vallejo Yacht Club since 1900 and continue today. Incoming cruises from the Delta clubs including Sacramento, Stockton Sailing Club and others augment the visitors from the "downbay clubs". The Vallejo Yacht Club fleet has a full schedule of cruises each year, often starting in February and traditionally ending with the cruise to Solano Yacht Club in October. A typical cruise organized by the cruise chairman includes both power and sailboats, and a sailboat race to the destination is often included. Upon arrival at the host club a "happy hour" aboard the boats or at the clubhouse is followed by dinner and often entertainment. A breakfast is usually available at the club on the following morning. Popular destinations for Vallejo cruises have been Richmond, Point San Pablo, Encinal, Corinthian, San Francisco, Treasure Island, San Rafael, Loch Lomond, Petaluma, Martinez, and Solano Yacht Clubs. One of the largest cruises took place on February 14, 1976, when 30 boats and 125 yacht club members went to Petaluma to help



The pile drive (left) and club-member-built dredge were used to construct the present harbor. Photograph circa 1949-50.

that city celebrate its bicentennial and dredging of the river and yacht basin. Bill Frye organized the "Geritol" cruises in 1982. The club's old timers meet once per month to go by boat to a nearby yacht club or restaurant for lunch. Walt McComas on "Sea Foam" has been the official Geritol cruiseboat. Destinations include Benicia, Martinez, Rodeo, and Bruce Oelschlager's home on the Napa River. One of their most successful cruises was to the California Maritime Academy on April 19, 1982.

Cruises along the California coast as far south as San Diego by yacht club members have been fairly numerous, particularly in recent years when boats and equipment have improved dramatically. Cruises up the coast beyond Point Reyes are rare because of the hard beat into the wind and waves caused by the prevailing westerlies and the Japanese current.

Long voyages undertaken by Vallejo Yacht Club members are a fascinating part of the club history. Accounts of these voyages since 1956 have appeared in the "Binnacle" thus allowing the less adventuresome "armchair" sailors to share these experiences.

The earliest account of a long voyage by a club member is that of the schooner "California", to Hawaii and the South Pacific. The vessel was built near the yacht club in 1935 by club member John Polkinghorn. In 1960, "Blue Star" a 37-foot ketch owned by club member Ernest Wilson sailed to Hawaii. US Navy officer Will Chestnut, Don Kay and Andy Verducci delivered "Mama" to Lahaina, Hawaii, in May of 1976. Scott Lawler with crew members Jimmy Robbins (age 14), Frank Calligan and Nick Hauser sailed his Columbia 36, "Artful Dodger" to Hawaii in 16 days with

a return trip of 21 days. Round trip voyages up the coast to Puget Sound and some on to Alaska include: Bert Richardson in the "Marquesa" (1979), John and Glynis McKay in "Picean" (1980), Tom and Virginia Hosley in "Snowflake" (1983), Bill and Carolyn Daly in "Ichi Ban" (1986-87) and Dave Lastufka and Kim Harbeck in "Ariel" (1982). "Ariel" also cruised to Mexico in 1984 as did Al and Linda Middleton in "La Machine" (1982).

Vallejo Yacht Club members who sailed their boats to Mexico, through the Panama Canal, the Caribbean and the east coast include: Bill and Jean Robinson in "Tango Too", Dick and Sandy Abbott in "Belo Horizonte" and Russ and Lois Robinson in "Some Fun II". The latter three were multi-year voyages.

Two Vallejo Yacht Club boats hold the record for the most extensive cruises. "Jabberwocky III" and "Kanska" were both sailed by retired couples. Garry and Berta Saxon started their cruise from Erie, Pennsylvania, in 1973 after purchasing "Jabberwocky (a Pearson Invicta 39) and sailed down to the Caribbean and trucked the boat back to Vallejo. In 1977 the boat was again trucked to Corpus Christi, Texas, and then sailed up the east coast, through the Great Lakes, hence by truck to the northwest. After cruising the Columbia River and Puget Sound they sailed back to Vallejo. Phase three of their voyaging took them south, through the Panama Canal, the Caribbean, east coast, back down the Mississippi and other rivers, and a final truck trip back to Vallejo Yacht Club in 1987. Berta and Garry have lived aboard "Jabberwocky" throughout this fourteen year period.

Bill Batchelor's cruising adventures began



Old timers meet at VYC in August 1947. From left to right are, standing, Bert Ryan, Joe Emms, Jean Shaeffer, Dick Stoddard, and, seated, Herman Streichan, Toney Smith, Bill Kirkland, and Jack Scully in slicker.

with a cruise to the Channel Islands, California, in 1968 in the Tahiti ketch, "Nepenthe". Although the return trip was slow, a Tahiti ketch is not known for its speed to windward. Bill stated that he could hardly wait until he could cruise 365 days a year. His dream came true in 1982 when after years of building his Westsail 32, "Kanska", he and Thelma set sail on December 9, 1982, heading south. They left San Diego on March 28, 1983, and arrived 19 days later in Hawaii. The next stop was Pelican, Alaska, after a slow 28-day trip from Hawaii. After cruising Alaska they traveled south and found a berth for the winter at Port Townsend, Washington. In the spring of 1984 they cruised British Columbia and Puget Sound. They returned to Vallejo on September 10, 1984, 21 months and two days after departing from Vallejo. They left again in January of 1985 for a voyage that included Mexico, Tahiti, the Marquesas, Bora Bora, Huahine, Raiatea, and on to Hilo, Hawaii. After wintering in Hawaii "Kanska" sailed back to Vallejo in September of 1987.

Four Vallejo boats took one way voyages and did not return to Vallejo. "Mama" mentioned earlier, "Poseidon" with John and Helen

Howard sailed to Mexico in 1971 where they lived aboard for a number of years. Monte Walker, who built his boat from surplus steel and other materials such as the mast made from truck drive shafts welded together, rigging from surplus power pole guys and an ingenious transmission using automobile tires and wheels, sailed to Mexico in 1983 where he remains aboard "Monte Bell". "Darwin", a Bristol 27, was sailed to Hawaii in 1978 by Larry Ohs. Larry returned to the San Francisco Bay area in April 1982 to crew in the Farallons double-handed race. In the sudden storm that swept down on the fleet he and his boat, among others, were lost at sea. The only other Vallejo Yacht Club member lost at sea was William Jones and his crewman Van Reyper who were found washed ashore near Half Moon Bay in November of 1971. They were returning from Monterey Bay.

A number of boats have been built by Vallejo Yacht Club members. In the early days many boats were built locally but it is uncertain how many of the yacht club fleet were built by members.

The schooner "California" was the largest boat built by a VYC member. John Polkinghorn

built the 57-foot three-masted vessel in 1934-35 just south of the old VYC clubhouse. Polkinghorn joined the club in 1920, served on the board of directors, as port captain, fleet captain and as the club steward. Red Fox recalls helping caulk the decks and launching the "California". She sailed in the San Francisco Race to Honolulu in 1936. It was Polkinghorn's dream to sail the boat to England. He started out in 1939 by sailing to the Marquesas. Unfortunately, World War II began in Europe that year and the crew refused to continue into the potentially troubled waters. She then remained in the South Seas for a year when Polkinghorn's son, Tom, and a crew returned her to Vallejo. After the war the "California" was sold to two men who wanted to sail around the world. This voyage was never completed. In the 1960s she was a cruise charter boat taking tourists from Ali Wai Harbor, Honolulu, on dinner cruises near Diamond Head. In 1976, Captain George Falkesgaard, president of the Scandinavian Shipping and Charter Service, bought her for charter cruises in the San Diego harbor. Tom Hosley was aboard her twice in the late 1970s. She was rigged as a brigantine at that time. Unfortunately, on February 15, 1981, she ran

aground at Dana Point in the fog while returning from a whale watching excursion with fifty-four passengers aboard. They were all rescued. Although she was refloated she was beyond repair.

Ray Clazie built two sail boats in addition to several El Toros. In 1949 he built and sailed "Fuzzy", Bear Class boat #49. His present boat, "Crony", a Friendship sloop design, was built in his yard at home over a period of several years and was completed in 1970. His craftsmanship is evident in the fine construction of his boat. Ray also carved the trail boards and billet head that are in the Staircase of Sea Power in the Vallejo Naval and Historical Museum.

The brigantine "Redbird" is another example of fine workmanship. She was built by Norman "Bonny" Bonenberger over a ten year period at his Vallejo shop and was launched on July 24, 1982. Ernie and Marcella Woods built "Springtides", a Chesapeake Bay skipjack design by William Adkins, in their backyard in Pleasant Hill and the launching was in May 1978. Walter Al Richardson liked the design of the Thunderbird so well that he built a larger version in ferro cement called "Sea Dancer". Of the powerboats built by club members, "Francis F.", a power cruiser was built by Red Fox in 1927. Herman Streichan and Ed Brovelli completed their forty-foot power cruisers "Wiphen" and "Teema" from identical hulls at the Nunes Boatyard in Sausalito. Both men finished the interiors and superstructures of their vessels.

Power boat racing was just getting started in 1900 when the Vallejo Yachting and Rowing Club was organized. Racing was mostly between launches and runabouts powered with small gasoline engines of various types. Horace Etzel won the Semi Speed Trophy on July 4, 1911, in "Kalitan". The trophy won by Etzel is the oldest trophy in the club's collection.

A photograph of the 1908 Labor Day race shows boats of long, narrow, round-bottom design. As automobile engines were developed they were adapted for use in boats. This led to larger and faster runabouts and cruisers. Fast inboard speedboats became popular after World War I when surplus airplane engines, particularly the Hispano-Suizas and Curtis OX-5 were used. Outboard motor races became very popular in the 1930s with the development of more powerful and reliable outboard racing engines. Races were held in Mare Island Channel with the Yacht Club providing a fine place to watch. The Yacht Club sponsored some of these races.

Another facet of powerboat racing was "over-the-bottom" racing in power cruisers under the auspices of the Northern California Power Cruiser Association which was established in 1935. The rules state: "The contest is one of skill and good navigation, contestants being called upon to maintain at all times their declared speed over the ground in spite of wind, tide or current." This is no mean feat considering the strong wind and tide patterns of the Bay. Vallejo Yacht Club members Paul Streichan, E.J. Casper, Don Bishop, Bob Carden, Robert Frank, Stanley Lathan, Joe Schlosser, and Ed Silveira were the most active participants. Both

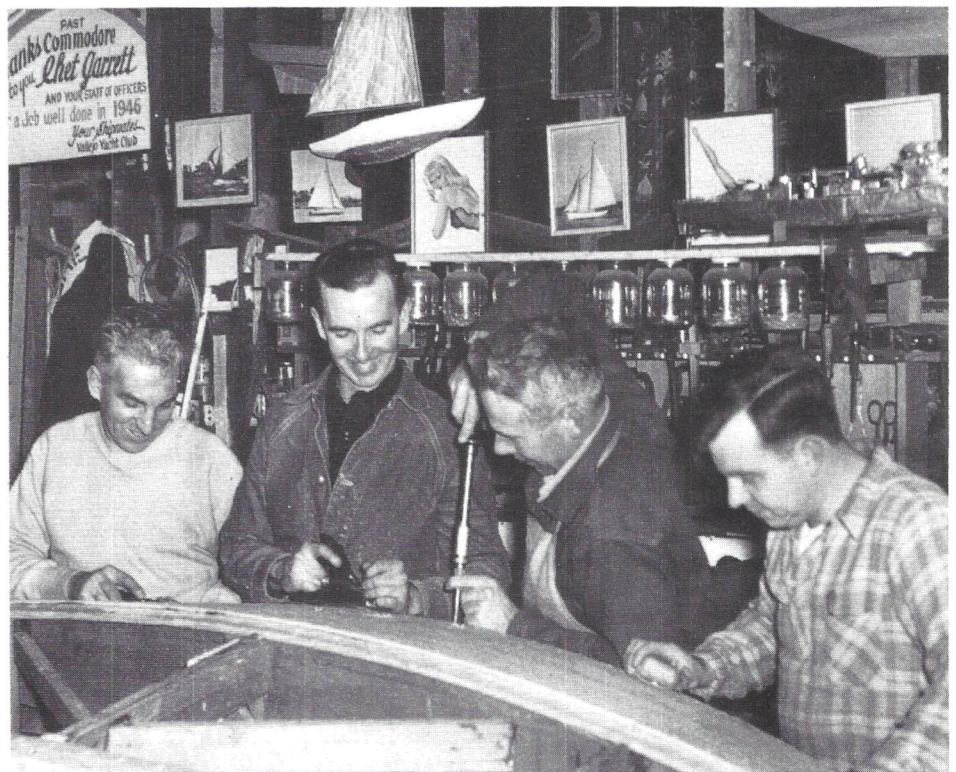
Don Bishop and Paul Streichan served as commodores of the Association. Don Bishop won the John Gudelj Perpetual Trophy in 1974 in "Po-Ho". Dr. Casper won the fifty-mile race from Martinez to Stockton in 1936. The only record we have of a VYC combined power and sailboat over-the-bottom race was to Napa on May 4, 1940, when the contestants selected to race either at five knots or eight knots. The results are not recorded. Vallejo Yacht Club has hosted the annual Hearst Regatta for many years. This powerboat race has had as many as sixty power cruisers coming to Vallejo. For the October 24, 1972, "predicted log" race from Richmond pier to VYC a three-foot tall trophy was donated by the Vallejo Downtown Association. Both the NAPC power cruiser race and the Yacht Racing Association of San Francisco Bay annual Vallejo sailboat race were held on the same day on May 7, 1938. A joint race was also held on May 9, 1942. In this race 125 sailboats started at 2:30 p.m. from Tiburon and 34 power cruisers started at 3:30 p.m. Because of military wartime restrictions Tiburon was the starting place rather than Oakland. Past Commodore Ellie Mullin raced his motor cruiser "Nancy M. II" as did Commodore Toney Smith in his sailboat "Vagabond". A report of the Vallejo Race of 1944 listed 100 boats participating. Over 500 guests crowded into the clubhouse at the end of the race on May 13, 1944. Boats were anchored in the channel in front of the clubhouse and the crews were ferried ashore. Chet Garrett in his Bird class boat "Shearwater" was entered in that race.

The Yachting Year Book has been published since 1922 by the Pacific Interclub Yachting Association (PICYA). Information from this year book has been especially helpful in iden-

tifying photographs of the Vallejo Yacht Club boats and in reconstructing the history of cruises and races to Vallejo. PICYA handled all racing schedules until 1935 when the job got too big. At that time NCPCA took over motorboat racing and YRA took charge of the sailboat race schedules. PICYA still prints the Yachting Year Book and conducts the "Opening Day on the Bay" ceremonies. Bob Carden has taken a lengthy active leadership role in PICYA and served as its commodore in 1978.

Sailboat racing at the Vallejo Yacht Club in the early days was an informal affair because the sailing fleet was small. On February 27, 1919, Thomas Bolger recommended that club races be held on a regular annual basis for yachts and motorboats. Cups were donated and the first race was held on May 8, 1919. Robert Ryan won the sailboat race in "Pronto" and A.E. Kelshaw in "Flirt" won the powerboat race on lapsed time and Joe Emms in "Margaret E." on actual time.

From 1900 on, the sailing fleets of various clubs on San Francisco Bay started the tradition of cruising to Vallejo on one day and racing home on the following day. This cruise-race evolved into the first race of the yachting season and by the early 1920s became known as the PICYA Cruise and Race to Vallejo and was listed in the Yachting Year Book from 1924 to 1935 when it became the YRA Vallejo Race. The number of boats participating grew each year until in 1970 when 585 boats crossed the finish line plus an estimated 100 additional boats that came along for the ride and party fun. Because of the rough weather, three sunken boats, and the great number of boats in the race, the U.S. Coast Guard forced the fleet to be divided into two sections in 1971 with one half



Yacht club members built four El Toros in Vallejo in 1947. Shown here in Ray Clazie's garage are, starting at left, Ray Sage, Ray Clazie, Chester Garrett, and Don Bishop.

of the boats coming to Vallejo and the others to Coyote Point on an alternate year schedule. This split continued until 1987 when the racing fleet had diminished to a manageable size. In 1987 all boats again came to Vallejo with 423 finishers. The Vallejo Race remains as one of the largest races in the nation.

Vallejo Yacht Club boats have participated regularly in the YRA races since the end of World War II. Arthur Krause brought his Hurricane -5 "Sea Spinster" in 1949 and raced her in YRA until the early 1980s. George Van Dolson has been a winner in two boats, "Zinfandel" and "Unicorn". Likewise Gary Cicerello in "Sleeper" and "Outrageous" has been a long-term YRA racer.

Another sailboat racing group that Vallejo Yacht Club has actively supported is the Small Boat Racing Association of Northern California. It was established in 1937 for small boats under 20 feet. Ray Clazie served as chairman from 1943 through 1946. Early boats were mostly El Toros, Melodies and Snipes. Vallejo Yacht Club has hosted SBRA regattas which included a joint effort on March 23, 1969, with the Vallejo Sailing Club. Recent regattas at Clear Lake were run by the Vallejo Yacht Club Juniors. Jeff Kay was the 1974 fleet champion. Tim Tiefenbach won the B championship in 1981.

The junior program and membership have waxed and waned over the years. The first listing of junior members appeared in 1909. Junior membership allowed youngsters to participate in the club's boating and social affairs at reduced initiation fees and dues. The major purpose of the junior membership was and is today to encourage young people to become interested in boating. Four of the club's commodores, Red Fox, "Shorty" Yuravich, LeRoy

Taylor, and Paul Streichan all joined the club as junior members. On June 28, 1936, junior member LeRoy Taylor won the George Bangle Trophy for a sailboat race.

In 1962 Mike Heffernan, junior program coordinator, proposed that the club finance the junior program at \$700 per year to pay for a youth director for June and July. The proposal was voted down with 71 against and 21 in favor. The largest number of junior members was 35 members in 1979.

In 1975 Commodore Horace MacKerrow assigned Vice Commodore "Tiny" Robbins the task of getting the youth program "off the ground". Robbins, assisted by Tom Ochs, organized a sailing and racing program for the juniors. By 1979 the sailing program flourished with El Toros, Lasers and Toppers available for the Tuesday evening sailing classes. Holly Fuerstenberg and Monica Sweitzer each served several terms as president of the juniors. In 1982 under Monica Sweitzer's leadership, tickets were sold for a color television as the prize in a fund raiser. The juniors were active in the racing circuit with Jimmy Coburn and Mike McConnell as the hot racers. Adult advisors in recent years include: Vern Coburn, Margot MacKerrow, Bruce Oelschlager, Tim Donovan, Howard Gilbert, and Kay Scherzinger.

The Midget Ocean Racing Association (MORA) has attracted VYC members. Horace MacKerrow first raced in MORA in 1968 in his Columbia 30, "Osibisa". He participated in the MORA San Diego Race in August 1973 and again in 1974. MacKerrow was commodore of MORA in 1974 at the same time he was vice commodore of Vallejo Yacht Club. In 1973 four Vallejo Yacht Club boats, "Osibisa", "Unicorn", "Si Bon", and "Robanray" raced



Christy Huddle, VYC's first female regular member and Susan Lane, its first female "Fleet Captain Sail".

MORA. In 1974 "Osibisa" and "Unicorn" took eight trophies between them. Former VYC member Franz Klitza who now races under the Richmond Yacht Club banner has been a consistent winner on the MORA circuit.

Probably the biggest win by a Vallejo Yacht Club member occurred on August 1, 1975, when Jim Bonovich in "Ce Ce Bon" won the Sir Thomas Lipton Challenge Trophy by defeating "Molly B" (SFYC) and "Gamma" (STFYC).

Gary Cicerello won the Columbia 26 National Championship Series in "Outrageous" on July 19-20, 1975, with the races held in San Pablo Bay and jointly conducted by the Columbia 26 Association and VYC.

Wednesday night club races are a very popular activity with over thirty boats in three classes participating. On a windy Wednesday it is still hard to beat Art Krause, at the age of 78 in "Sea Spinster", or to beat George Van Dolson anytime. New design boats with the latest equipment and sails keep the competition tough.

A discussion of sailboat racing would not be complete without mentioning women's racing. A "powder puff" race for women was held in 1956. In 1973, Margot MacKerrow organized "The First Annual Powder Puff Race". Women's races have been held at various times since then. Barbara Owens is currently the VYC representative to the Women's Racing Association which was established in 1984.

Social events have always been an important part of the yachting scene. Early accounts of Vallejo Yacht Club social activities have included "smokers", picnics, banquets, and cruises. Although club meetings and "smokers" were for the male members only, the other events usually included the ladies. The most popular annual events through the years have been the New Year's party, crab feed, Jigg's dinner, Opening Day, the YRA Race, Fourth of July lighted boat parade, Halloween party, the racing awards dinner, and the Change of Command dinner. Two events for the children each year are the children's Christmas party and the Easter egg hunt. The children's Christmas party was started by Angelo Rega, a bachelor, 1935. He supported it financially and when he died his will specified that his boat be sold and the proceeds go to the Christmas party.

The major social event of 1975 was the "Dia-



Clarence "Red" Fox cut the ribbon at the dedication of the new VYC clubhouse on February 22, 1969. Bert Ryan (left) and Bill Jeffries assisted.

mond Jubilee" celebrating the Vallejo Yacht Club's first 75 years. The two-day event on August 23 and 24, 1975, featured a banquet with Congressman Robert Leggett as featured speaker, a special printed program which included a brief history of the club, an open house on Sunday, and El Toro and Hobie Cat races. Bill Hanley was general chairman, Wyman Riley was master of ceremonies and Commodore Horace MacKerrow was responsible for the honored guests.

Early day Fourth of July celebrations included decorating the clubhouse with bunting, boat races, and incoming cruises. The lighted boat parade became a tradition in the late 1930s. In recent years prizes for the lighted boat parade contest have been furnished by the city of Vallejo. The parade was followed by fireworks over the Mare Island Channel. Joe Schlosser on "Humu II" was the winner on several occasions when he borrowed some marines from Mare Island who were dressed in Revolutionary War uniforms, or on another occasion as marines raising the flag at Iwo Jima. Al Richardson on "Sea Dancer" specialized in animated characters such as Yankee Doodle Dandy.

The Jigg's dinner in March each year featured the corned beef and cabbage cooked by Dick Jensen. Dinner was followed by the "Irish Sweepstakes" featuring beautiful female jockeys riding wooden horses as they advanced down the track according to the throw of the dice.

The first stirrings about a need to replace the old clubhouse occurred in 1961. The Vallejo Redevelopment Agency was authorized to purchase and remove the clubhouse as part of a major downtown redevelopment project. Nothing happened until 1965 when at the January 25, 1965, meeting club members voted overwhelmingly to launch the reconstruction project which included a new clubhouse, ways, parking, landscaping, and other harbor improvements. In June 1965 Commodore Dr. Bob Frank signed over the deed to the old clubhouse and a check for \$50,000 from the Redevelopment Agency was placed in escrow. On October 15, 1966, a "kick-off" dinner was held in the old clubhouse boat shed and the new clubhouse project was under way. Vice Commodore Dr. George Halterman had prepared a printed seven-page report which gave a brief history of the old clubhouse and the architect's sketch of the proposed building. The estimated cost of the new clubhouse was \$123,000. Financing, over and above the \$50,000 received from the Redevelopment Agency, was to come from the sale of promissory notes to members. The notes were in the amount of \$50 each with interest at 5 per cent repayable starting in 1969. A bank loan provided the needed remainder after a second plea to members for additional funds to cover a \$32,000 shortfall. Ground breaking ceremonies were held on March 19, 1967. Jack Hough was master of ceremonies with architect Bill Jefferies, Al Newman, and Commodore Hal Roemnick participating. Red Fox was delegated as the club's construction supervisor. Contractor Emil Meyers began the task of building by driving 90 piles. One thou-



The old VYC clubhouse in 1967. Photograph by Ed Wartburg, Sr.

sand linear ft. of 12' x 16" girders were bolted to them; 6,000 lbs. of steel and 30,000 board feet of decking were laid to form the base for the building.

The first event to be held in the new building was the New Year's party of December 31, 1967, which featured a ham and turkey buffet for the price of \$6.00 per person. The official move into the clubhouse was in February 1968, and the old clubhouse was demolished shortly thereafter. Among the items taken from the old clubhouse for use in the new facility was the bar which was modified several times and used until 1987. The fine hardwood flooring from the old dance floor was installed in the new clubhouse main room. Dedication ceremonies for the new clubhouse were not conducted until February 22, 1969, with a steak dinner and dance following the dedication. The promissory notes and the bank loan were paid off and a gala mortgage-burning party was held on December 2, 1978. Upgrading and redecorating have periodically taken place. A major expansion of the bar area was accomplished in 1987.

The history of the Vallejo Yacht Club provides a glimpse at the ever changing scene of

the water-oriented community of Vallejo and of the San Francisco Bay area as it relates to yachting and recreational boating. As a resource for yachting history the Vallejo Yacht Club has one of the few extensive collections of records, photographs and other materials in its archives. An ongoing committee is recording and storing these materials as they become available. A pictorial history of the Vallejo Yacht Club is available as a twenty-five minute slide show.



Two corrections have been received to the first part of this article. On page 14 of our Dec. 1987 issue the date for the Pacific Inter-club Yachting Association formation should be 1896. Then on page 20 of the same issue the statement that the 211th Artillery installed and maintained the barrage balloons is not correct. The 211th was an anti-aircraft Artillery unit which had guns for air raid protection of Mare Island. The barrage balloons were operated by the 309th Barrage Battalion which came from Camp Tyson, Tenn. in mid 1942.

COMMODORES

Vallejo Yacht Club

William J. Wood	1900	C.A. Peabody	1950
A.E. Chapman	1901-06	R.N. Clazie	1951
John P. Scully	1907-08	A.F. Krause	1952
W.S. Pierce	1909	Ed O'Brien	1953
David Barry, Sr.	1910	H.F. Brinkman	1954
J.W. Oliver	1911	Frank E. Johnston	1955
Grant L. Allen	1912	Paul H. Streichan	1956
Theodore Swanson	1913	J.A. Montgomery	1957
Robert H. Demmon	1914-15	Dr. E.F. Lazarus	1958
A.L. Stoddard	1916	R.M. Penn	1959
Herman Streichen	1917	D.D. Putnam	1960
Robert Ryan	1918	Ivor Welsh	1961
T.J. Bassford	1919	Jack L. Hough	1962-63
Herman Streichen	1920	Dr. E.F. Lazarus	1964
J. Emms	1921	Dr. Robert L Frank	1965
C.W. Fox	1922	Hal Roemmick	1966-67
W.W. Neale	1923	William Batchelor	1968
John A. Browne	1924	William L. Jefferies	1969
Robert Ryan	1925	Wm. M. Hanley	1970
J. Emms	1926-27	Ed. Wartburg, Jr.	1971
C.W. Fox	1928-29	LeRoy G. Taylor	1972
J. Emms	1930	Robert L. Baron	1973
James Blackwood	1931-32	Robert D. Carden	1974
C.W. Fox	1933	Horace G. MacKerrow	1975
R.E. Ludford	1934	James "Tiny" Robbins	1976
Dr. E.J. Casper	1935-36	Dr. C.T. Hosley	1977
Leland S. Martin	1937	Charles L. Piano	1978
Francis A. Algeo	1938	David R. Tiefenbach	1979
George G. Mercer	1939	Seth E. Hargrave, Sr.	1980
John R. Greig	1940	Robert F. Luce, Sr.	1981
E.J Mullen	1941	William A. Bird	1982
Antone Smith, Jr.	1942	Robert D. Paedon	1983
Frank Yuravich	1943	Larry Gibbs	1984
John Clark	1944	Norman Borges	1985
Ernest Califro	1945	Bruce Oelschlaeger	1986
Chester T. Garrett	1946	Howard Gilbert	1987
Jean Schaefer	1947-48	Norman C. Owens	1988
O.B. Earle	1949		